

To Kill a Songbird

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To Kill a Songbird

by [thequeenofwhump](#)

Summary

“He was completely, one-hundred percent screwed.

No one was looking for him. He was in the most secure prison in the world, which was filled to the brim with armed personnel. He was wearing a shock collar.

And if he somehow figured all that out, he still couldn't swim.

Yep. Screwed."

Peter Parker died six months ago in a fire after a horrible chemical accident.

...or did he?

At least, that's what Tony believes when an unemployed Ross illegally imprisons the Avengers on the Raft, which was supposed to have been destroyed.

AU where the Accords were declared stupid, Ross was fired, Tony and Steve became friends again, and they all live together in Avengers tower.

Peter Parker-Centric. Trigger warning for suicidal themes.

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

It's Quiet Uptown

Chapter Summary

There are moments that the words don't reach

There is suffering too terrible to name

You hold your child as tight as you can

Then push away the unimaginable

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Consciousness came to Tony in waves.

The first thing he was aware of was the incredibly sterile smell - like the kind in hospitals. Like wherever he was had been drenched in disinfectant four times.

He could hear the groaning next, which he realized with a start was coming from *him*. Which, of course, led to the realization that his head was pounding.

He was lying on a stiff bed, so he definitely wasn't in his own room. This was *not* his designer mattress.

So where the heck -

Then he remembered what had happened. How Ross had basically kidnapped all of the Avengers in cold blood.

Of course.

He opened his eyes to fluorescent lighting piercing his vision. He blinked a few times and a metal ceiling came into focus. It looked a bit familiar.

Ignoring the pain, he sat up and swung his legs over the side of the bed (if you could even call it a bed). He was in a small cell, and he realized with a flip of his stomach why he recognized his surroundings.

He was on the Raft.

*Sh*t.*

He looked out the glass wall to see many other cells, with his fellow teammates held captive inside. His fellow teammates, who were already awake.

Perfect.

"Well look who decided to join us," Clint said, leaning against the glass. "I thought we would never see those annoying peepers again!"

“Clint,” Steve said warningly.

“All right, all right. Happy to see you, Stark,” he said with a mock bow.

“Likewise, Legolas,” he said sarcastically.

He took a roll of everyone he could see. Wanda (who was in a straight jacket), Natasha, Steve, Bucky, Sam, Clint, and Scott were all in his direct line of vision. He couldn’t see the two cells next to him.

“Hey Cap,” he said, “who’s on my right?”

“You know Tones,” the voice of Rhodey said, “you could’ve asked me yourself.”

“Whoops,” he said with about as much feeling as a poem about a doorknob. “Guess it slipped my mind. On my left?”

For some reason, Steve started laughing a bit.

“Shut up,” Sam said, unamused. “Are we still on that?”

Tony didn’t know what they were talking about, nor did he care. “Anyone with a few brain cells gonna answer me?”

“It’s empty,” Bucky said. “It’s the only one.”

So Ross basically had all of them trapped.

His head snapped to where Steve was still laughing. “Is it really the best time for this?”

Cap sobered up a bit. “Sorry. But do you think there’s anything better to do?”

“I don’t know,” he said, feigning ignorance. “Maybe talk about an *escape plan*?”

“You’ve been out for hours, Tony,” Sam said. “Every time we try anything, we get shocked by these babies.” He pointed to a shock collar around his neck.

Tony brought a tentative hand up to his neck, and sure enough, a large shock collar rested there. “Sh*t.”

“Cap said the same thing,” Clint said. “You should’ve seen it - nearly everyone said ‘lang-“

“As much as this bickering is entertaining to the rest of us,” Natasha said, sounding bored out of her mind, “what are we gonna do? I’m about ready to kill Ross in seventy two different ways.”

“I don’t know,” Steve said. “The accords were eradicated over six months ago. So Ross is definitely outside of the law on this.”

Steve might’ve kept talking, but Tony wasn’t listening.

Six months ago.

That was when the youngest member of the Avengers had died.

It had been a normal Thursday. Avengers Tower had started off as it usually did: around the

breakfast table.

The kid was inhaling his cereal like it was air and talking a mile a minute, which should've been physically impossible. But this kid *defied* impossible.

"You're going to wear out your tongue out if you keep talking," Tony said with an underlying tone of fondness that he couldn't completely mask with annoyance.

"Well, I can't help it if - shoot, I'm late!" he said, jumping out of his chair as he checked his watch. "I've got a lab today in chemistry - worth ten percent of my grade. Wish me luck!"

"Good luck," half of the Avengers said half-heartedly. The rest of them just waved as the kid grabbed his backpack and jumped in the elevator, smiling brighter than the sun.

"See you later, kid," Tony called. "I'm picking you up, remember?"

"Yeah, see you, To-" the elevator doors cut him off as they closed shut.

Tony turned back to his waffles and saw that most of the others were smirking at him. "What?"

"Oh, nothing," Natasha said, sipping her coffee. "Just the fact that you let a kid melt the ice surrounding your heart."

"Okay, first of all, there is no ice surrounding my heart." Half the Avengers snorted. "And if there was, I wouldn't let some kid melt it." Cue more laughter.

"Face it, Tones," Scott said, "you've joined the Dad Club."

"It's a small club," Clint said. "We're always looking for new members."

"Whatever," Tony said, rolling his eyes. "You guys love him just as much as I do."

"Yeah, but you're the one he looks up to," Sam said through a donut.

Well, of course, Tony knew that was true.

Ever since the kid's aunt had died (man, the kid had been a *wreck*) a little under a year before, he had joined Tony in Avengers Tower. Tony had taken guardianship of him (nothing as daunting as adoption), and they had both grown accustomed to their new lives.

Then the Accords were declared unconstitutional in the US, and the UN had gotten rid of them. The rest of the Avengers made up, and Tony forgave Bucky and Steve (with some help from the kid, of course).

From then on they had lived together in the tower, and the kid was the newest official member of the Avengers. Life was good, and he loved that kid like he was his own son.

But he didn't need the others to know that.

"Like I said: *whatever*."

"It's not like you got him a brand new set of headphones you were going to give him after school, you know, to accommodate for his sensitive hearing," Clint said. "Oh, wait..."

Tony threw his fork down and stood up. "You guys are the worst."

“Don’t mention it!” Clint called after him as he left the room.

The rest of the day was pretty standard. Tony was in the lab for most of it, working in silence, which was why he was startled when his phone started ringing.

He looked over at the screen and was confused when he saw the caller ID. “Hey Fri, what class does the kid have right now?”

“Chemistry, sir,” Friday said with a light chirp.

Tony smirked. “He probably wants help with his lab. You know what, he can figure it out himself.”

So Tony let the call go to voicemail.

It must have been about twenty minutes later when Steve’s caller ID showed up on his phone.

He picked up. “Hey, what’s-“

“Tony, something’s happened.”

The super soldier’s tone had Tony up and walking to the elevator in a matter of seconds.

“What happened? Is it Ross again? I swear, if that son of a-“

“Something happened at the school,” he said with a shaky tone.

Tony’s blood ran cold. “*What?*”

“Get down here. *Now.*”

The call clicked off.

That trip was the longest of his life, even though the Iron Man suit made it less than two minutes long.

When he got there, he wished he hadn’t.

The whole building was black, with smoke rising from it.

There had been a fire.

A whole sea of students filled the parking lot, and he landed next to where Steve was talking to the Principal in hushed tones.

“What happened?” he asked after he stepped out of the suit, trying to keep his voice from shaking.

The principal looked at him sorrowfully. “I’m . . . so sorry. The chemistry lab was today, and one of our students thought it would be funny to switch around some chemicals in the lab. There was a small explosion. The room quickly caught on fire, and we had to evacuate the building.” He paused for a moment, and he had yet to look into the genius’ eyes. “Luckily, no one outside of the lab room was injured. A few students that were part of the experiment were burned, but they were mostly unharmed.

“Unfortunately, the student who had mixed the switched chemicals was severely injured. They were unable to make it out of the building. I’m sorry.”

Tony knew why the principal was apologizing.

But his heart didn't want to believe it. "Who was it?"

"Tony," Steve said, voice tight. "Peter's. . . . Peter's gone."

"Play it again, Friday."

"Hey, Tony. Something kinda happened a' the school. Could you come pick me up? I swear I'm not in trouble with m' teachers. There was a bi' of a blas' and then . . . I dunno. 'S gettin kinda hot . . . I can' think straigh'. But I swear I won' be late when y' pick me up la'er. I've gotta go . . . My aunt's callin' me. I think I see 'er . . . I think she wants me to get up n' walk wi' her . . . but I can't move. Bu' I'll try to la'er when you ge' here . . . 'm kinda tired . . . G'nigh' . . . see ya later."

"Again, Fri."

"Sir, your heart rate seems to be elevating each time I play the voicemail. Are you certain you would--"

"Yes. Play it again."

"Hey, Tony. Something kinda happened. . . ."

Tony's hand clenched around his glass. He had been doing so well with alcohol lately. But it hardly mattered now.

If he had picked up the phone, Peter would still be alive.

It was all his fault.

Tony shook himself out of his memories. He couldn't focus on that right now.

He looked around at the other cells. The others were either sitting on their cots or pacing around their tiny areas.

"So, any ideas on what we're supposed to do?" Tony asked no one in particular.

As if he had triggered it, the lights went out.

"What the h*ll?" Clint said, annoyed.

A crackly voice came over the speakers. "Lights out. No more talking until morning."

Tony had no desire to test the voltage in the shock collars, so he dropped onto the bed and sighed.

Memories it is, I guess . . .

After a long night of tossing and turning and eventual sleep, Tony was woken up by a screeching guard.

"Wake up! You either get out of those beds or deal with the metal around your necks! Up! Now!"

He grudgingly got out of his less than comfortable bed and leaned against the glass wall. “Is this nec-“

“No talking!” the guard shouted in his direction. “Now,” he said, turning back to everyone else as he circled the room, banging on the glass. “I was told to tell you that Ross will be here tomorrow to talk to you. He said he can’t wait to show you something special. Until then, you have the freedom to do as you please in your cells.”

And he left without a second glance.

“So,” Clint said when once they were alone, save for a few generic guards. “What are we gonna do?”

“We’re stuck,” Steve said. “There’s nothing *to* do.”

“Aren’t you the one who always tells us to sail our ships with positivity?” Sam asked.

“Yeah, cause he’s always been great at that,” Bucky said with an eye roll.

"Wonder what the 'something special' thing that Ross wants to show us is," Tony said, trying to stop the grandfathers before they could even start.

“Knowing Ross, it won’t be good,” Sam said, plopping back down onto his cot. Tony followed suit, only slower. His old age didn’t appreciate him standing for too long.

“Hey Wanda,” Tony said, looking over at her. “You can do the mind thing. Any idea what it is?”

She shrugged through her jacket. “I can’t really read minds in this thing, but I almost got a sense of . . . amusement? It’s hard to say.”

“Great,” Rhodey said from somewhere on Tony’s right. “Now we *know* it can’t be good.”

“So no one has any idea on how to escape?” Scott asked, pacing.

“No, we don’t,” Tony said.

He was lying.

He had something special up his sleeve, too. But before he used it, he had to know what Ross had in store for them.

And with the twenty-four hour surveillance, he couldn’t exactly voice his thoughts dead on.

So the hours went on in boredom, only broken by a few servings of a disgusting looking slop that made Tony’s insides want to be on his outside. So he didn’t eat anything for that first day on the raft.

Before they knew it, they were calling lights out.

Tony didn’t know if he should’ve been scared or nervous for the next day. Probably both.

But, as he drifted off into an uneasy sleep, he decided that anger and spite were the best ways to go when it came to Ross.

At least you’re not here, kid, he thought as sleep finally found him.

Peter cried silently as the guards shoved him into solitary. He wasn't sure what he had done to make them mad, but he was far beyond the point of being embarrassed by tears.

They had seen him cry enough. He stopped caring a while ago.

It wasn't like he would ever get out of this.

Everyone he had known thought he was dead.

He wished that he was.

Chapter End Notes

There's the first chapter!

This chapter was more of an introduction. For the next few, we'll be going back in time to see exactly what's going on with everyone's favorite spider.

This fic is totally Peter Parker-Centric.

Thor and Bruce are not there because...they would just smash out of the raft and it would ruin the plot? Sorry I'm bad at writing and there's too many characters ugh.

I love reviews! Please just take like 30 seconds and leave one! Even to tell me it sucks! I already know that, of course.

I'll update as fast as I can! But reviews and reader support help!!!!

Astronaut

Chapter Summary

'Cause tonight I'm feeling like an astronaut
Sending SOS from this tiny box
And I lost all signal when I lifted off
Now I'm stuck out here and the world forgot
Can I please come down, come down
'Cause I'm tired of drifting round and round
Can I please come down?

Chapter Notes

So, I told myself not to update for a few days...
But you guys just made my day and made me want to update as soon as possible!!!
Over 1000 hits in less than 24 hours?!?!?! Amazing!!!
Now, we see what happened to Peter....

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Peter didn't know why, but he had the urge to get out his phone and call someone.

He didn't know why. Maybe he needed something . . . A reminder? Help? Yeah . . . help sounded about right.

His thoughts were so slow, like they were trudging through molasses. He vaguely remembered getting hit in the head . . . and the air was funny. It was weird to breathe in. It was a good funny. Like a clown kind of funny. Heh.

He clicked the first contact he came across. It was Tony.

He waited for him to pick up, but he didn't. Huh. He usually did, so that was weird. Maybe it was because he was supposed to be in school? Or maybe he was supposed to be at the zoo. He wasn't sure.

He didn't really know what to say, so he just started talking. "Hey, Tony. Something kinda happened a' the school." What *had* happened? He couldn't really remember. "Could you come pick me up?" Oh, right, he was already coming to pick him up. Silly Peter.

He realized that Tony would probably think he had gotten into a fight or something. "I swear I'm not in trouble with m' teachers. There was a bi' of a blas' and then . . ." He trailed off. He couldn't remember anything after that.

"I dunno. 'S gettin kinda hot." Why was it so hot? It wasn't usually this hot in the school. "I can't think straigh'. But I swear I won't be late when y' pick me up la'er. I've gotta go," he said, trailing off again.

He realized his aunt had been calling him. She kept saying things like 'Get up, Peter' and 'Time to come home, Peter'. But he couldn't move. "My aunt's callin' me. I think I see 'er," he said. She was standing there with a smile on her face, and she was glowing a bunch, shining brighter than the embers surrounding her.

Since when were there embers?

"I think she wants me to get up n' walk wi' her," he said, unsure of what to say next. "But I can't move. Bu' I'll try to la'er when you ge' here," he said, stifling a yawn. Since when did he get so tired? "m kinda tired."

He trailed off again, falling asleep for a moment (since when had he been lying on the floor?). Then he realized he was being rude. Naughty Peter. "G'nigh'," he said. Wait, it wasn't bed time. He should say something else. Wasn't Tony picking him up later? That sounded about right. "See ya later."

He clicked off the call and sighed. He wanted to sleep, but May was rather insistent. He hated making her upset.

He was just about to reach out and grab her hand (but his hand felt weird, like it wasn't a part of his body anymore) when he was being lifted by a few guys in black uniforms. Since when had they gotten there?

"Target acquired," one of them said.

The guy probably kept talking, but Peter was too tired to care. He let sleep overwhelm his senses, hoping that May wouldn't be too upset with him when he woke up.

When Peter came to, he definitely wasn't in a good mood.

He lurched awake, and with a start, realized someone had slapped him into consciousness based on the way his cheek stung.

"Good. You're awake." A man was sitting across from him at a metal table.

His Spidey-sense was screaming *danger danger danger* at him.

Peter swallowed. "You didn't really give me much of a choice."

The mystery man laughed. "Get used to not having a choice, bug."

Peter hoped that that nickname didn't mean what he thought it meant.

He took stock of his situation. He was in a metal chair, and his hands were locked behind him by cuffs while his feet were locked to the chair. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't move them.

Vibranium, maybe?

“What do you want with me?” Peter asked, keeping his voice surprisingly steady.

“I want *you*,” the man said. “I want to see how you work. I want to know just how the great Spider-Man does it. How you tick.”

So the name “bug” *wasn't* for kicks. Great.

He didn't even bother trying to deny it. “The Avengers,” Peter said. “I'm one of them. They'll come looking for me.”

“Ah, well, that's where you're wrong,” he said, pulling out a tablet and setting on the table. “They all think you're . . . How do you say it? Deceased? Moved on?”

Peter's insides went cold. “They think I'm *dead*?”

He clasped his hands together. “Dead! That's the word!” He picked the tablet back up. “I even have a video from your funeral.”

Peter was struggling to breathe. “They had a funeral - they really believe that I'm . . . “

“They do indeed,” he said with a smile.

Peter blinked away a few tears. “Why are you doing this?”

“Because mutants and superheroes are dangerous. They need to be put in check. But you refuse to comply.”

Peter stared. “You're Ross.”

He smiled. “The one and only.”

“F*ck you.”

He was still smiling. “Now, we can watch this video, or we can see if that shock collar works.”

Peter was suddenly aware of a large piece of metal around his neck.

Breathe. Don't panic. Breathe.

“How long is the video?”

“Oh, only about twenty seconds. But it isn't watching paint dry.” He pulled it up on his tablet and turned it towards Peter.

It wasn't long, just like he said.

It was a video compilation of people crying. Ned. MJ. The Avengers. Tony.

Tony's was the longest, even though it was only about five seconds. But he looked so *lost*. So *broken*.

Peter only noticed he tears on his cheeks when Ross pulled away the tablet.

“If you still think they're looking for you, I can show you more. There were some *lovely* speeches-“

“No,” Peter said, finding his voice. “I - I believe you. How . . . how long was I out?”

Ross smirked. “The fire we staged caused some damage to you, so we had to keep you out of the picture for about a week before you were completely healed.”

“And-“

“And no one has had any suspicions in the past week about your death. That call you gave Tony really sold them. I couldn’t have written it better myself,” he said with another smirk. “Face it. You’re stuck with us.”

Peter *really* didn't want to admit it, but he knew Ross was right. They would probably never look for him. He was trapped. He was alone.

“What are you going to do with me?”

“We’re going to experiment on you. And if you behave, we’ll use painkillers.”

Peter’s blood ran cold at the idea of being cut open without anesthesia.

But he had to know one more thing. “Where am I?”

“You’re on the Raft: the most secure prison in the world. We’re somewhere in the middle of the Atlantic. And yes, we are underwater.”

So that settled it.

He was completely, one-hundred percent *screwed*.

No one was looking for him. He was in the most secure prison in the world, which was filled with armed personnel. He was wearing a shock collar.

And if he somehow figured all that out, he still couldn’t swim.

Yep. *Screwed*.

“So,” Ross said, leaning across the table a bit. “Are you going to behave?”

Peter took a deep breath. He couldn’t panic. Not now. “What choice do I have?”

Ross smiled. “I’m glad we’re on the same page.”

He motioned for the two guards that were behind Peter - one of them had probably smacked Peter awake - and they came forward, unhooking him from the chair and standing him up.

As soon as he was standing, he head butted one of the guards and kicked the other. He ran to the door, jumping so that his cuffed hands were in front of him. If he could just-

White hot pain suddenly arched up his spine and flared around his body. He fell to the ground, and he might’ve let out a scream, but he wasn’t sure, and it was all just *pain*-

And as soon it started, it stopped. He was left panting and sweating on the ground, and he stared upwards at a smirking Ross, who was leaning over him.

“Now, is our itsy bitsy spider ready to follow orders?”

His mind flashed back to when Tony had called him that, and how he had refused to talk to him for three days straight because of it.

Tony, who he would probably never see again.

I'm sorry, he thought.

"Yes," he said. "I am."

He was led to a cell. It was one of many in that section, and the glass door let him look at a large display of other cells just like it.

They yanked his cuffs off, shoved him inside, and slammed the door shut with such an air of finality that it made his stomach flip.

It was so small that he wanted to scream. Ever since the spider bite, he always had so much energy. Energy that was impossible to burn off unless he used his vigilante activities.

No way he could do that in here.

There was a bed. There was a stool. There was a glass door. There was a wall. And another wall. And another wall.

The thin cotton blanket probably would help with the cold just as much as the thin blue prisoner uniform. Seriously, it was *freezing*.

The lights went off at some point, and Peter decided it was in his best interest to sleep.

But he couldn't. He tossed and turned, but there was too much on his mind.

He thought he would end up crying, but it must've been too early for that to happen. He just felt . . . shocked. Almost like he was dreaming, ready to wake up at any moment.

He absolutely *refused* to think about anything other than the cold.

So he continued to toss and turn.

There was something he might've been able to do, but he wasn't sure if he was allowed.

Peter had always loved music. He had been in marching band before the spider bite (he played mellophone), but he had ended up having to quit. He told himself it was because he didn't have time, but he knew the real reason.

The drums, the brass, the high pitched squeaks from the clarinets - it was all too much for his dialed-up senses.

He had never been in choir (singing for an audience - *no thank you*), but he remembered Ben and May telling him he had the voice of an angel when he was little. And before that, he vaguely remembered singing lullabies with his parents when it was time for him to go to bed.

He never sang for anyone else. Not MJ, not Tony. Not even Ned.

But he had always loved to sing for May after particularly long days at work. She would always listen with a content smile on her face, leaning against the couch cushions like they were clouds.

May. God, he missed her. What he wouldn't give for her to brush his hair back and tell him everything would be alright.

But that wouldn't happen. Even if she was still around, he still would never see her again.

He could try to sing. What did he have to lose?

So, he started to sing a simple melody. He didn't even know what he was singing.

Maybe he *was* allowed to sing?

But a quick pain session with his collar and a sharp "*No singing!*" from the speakers told him *no*. He wasn't.

So much for that.

So after hours of tossing and turning, he finally fell asleep.

The next day went about as well as he could've expected.

It *sucked*.

He woke up to someone *screaming* at him to wake up and get on his feet. He quickly did as he was told, standing up straight as he looked beyond his door to see a nasty looking guard glaring at him. He talked him through about how he was to immediately get up when he was told, no questions asked, or he would be shocked.

He was given a bowl of slop to eat through a small slot in the door, and it tasted awful, but he was *starving*. So he ate the whole bowl.

He slid it back through the slot, where it was immediately picked up and taken out. He was then told he had the morning to himself.

At one point he asked if there was anything to do. A guard told him that he wouldn't get anything until he had gotten accustomed to the schedule. When he asked what kind of things he would get, he was told that if he spoke to them again he would be shocked.

Well. They were friendly.

He got the same slop for lunch, which was still disgusting.

But his afternoon would not be as free as his morning, apparently.

The same guard that woke him up stood in front of his cell. "We are going to take you to the experimentation division. Any funny business, and you will be shocked."

Peter nodded, and they opened the door to his cell and handcuffed him. He didn't try to escape. He really didn't want another session of electricity.

He let them march him down to where they would do the experiments. Before he could protest, they were strapping him down onto a large metal table and injecting him with something.

They were saying something, but he couldn't hear it.

His vision went black.

The weight of his whole situation came crashing down on him not too long after he regained consciousness.

He woke up in on the floor of his cell, in his underwear, head pounding. He briefly wondered why they didn't put him on his bed, but he was quickly thankful that they didn't.

He was filthy. Caked in blood.

He wanted to vomit, but he didn't think they would appreciate that.

That same guard was outside of his cell, tapping his foot impatiently. If the circumstances were any different, he would've laughed. But he didn't.

"Get up." Peter quickly got up. "Any funny business, and--"

"And I get shocked. I get it, yeesh."

That was apparently the wrong thing to say.

When he finally recovered from his agony and got off the floor again, he was handcuffed and taken a floor down.

He was then locked in a small room with nothing but a toilet and a shower.

The guard pounded on the door. "You have ten minutes."

After quickly using the toilet, he hopped into the shower and pulled back the flimsy curtain. He winced when the water only came out cold.

He scrubbed down, trying not to think about his own bathroom back home.

His thoughts screeched to a halt, that one word echoing around his head.

Home.

Tony ruffling his hair. Working in the lab. Friday telling him when to go to bed. Beating Clint at Mario Kart. Training with Steve and Natasha. Ned coming over to work on the Lego Death Star. MJ coming over to borrow a book and staying to watch a movie. Tony smirking at him from over the counter. Peter throwing popcorn at him.

Home.

Things he would never get to experience again.

He didn't realize that his tears had started to mix with the faucet water.

More pounding on the door. "Two minutes!"

He quickly finished rinsing off, dried himself, and pulled the blue prison uniform that they had left him just in time for the door to swing open.

He managed to keep it together until the lights went out (the rest of the evening basically

consisting of just slop). But as soon as they did, he couldn't hold it in anymore.

He grabbed his pillow and stuffed his face into it, sobbing.

He would never see any of them again. They all thought he was dead.

All he could think about was how he would never see anyone he loved again. The only human interaction he would have would be guards barking orders at him and scientists studying him like a rat. He would never get another touch or word of affection.

I'll never see any of you ever again.

Never. Never. *Never.*

He was completely and utterly alone.

Why didn't they just leave me to burn in that fire?

That thought completely knocked him off guard. He didn't think like that. He had always been an optimist - looking to the bright side of every situation.

There was no bright side here. He figured his days of a happy outlook on life were over.

He only cried harder.

Chapter End Notes

So now we know what happened to Peter!

I'm sorry, pls don't hate me.

The next few chapters will follow Peter and his time on the raft.

I hope you guys liked it! Leave a comment and a kudos if you did!

Bring Me to Life

Chapter Summary

Wake me up inside

Wake me up inside

Call my name and save me from the dark

Bid my blood to run

Before I come undone

Save me from the nothing I've become

Chapter Notes

Trigger warning for suicidal themes.

This is... a bit dark. And pretty short, but I swear the next one is really long.

I sincerely apologize in advance.

(And yes I'm aware the title is cringy I'm trying to lighten the mood)

The next few days were the same.

Waking up to the screeching guard. Slop. A very dull morning. More slop. Being taken out of his cell. Losing consciousness for a few hours. Waking up covered in blood. Ten minutes in the bathroom. A cold shower. Even more slop. Crying himself to sleep.

It was almost becoming normal. And that terrified him.

He lasted almost two weeks before he snapped.

He tried to think of an escape plan. He thought so hard about it that he got migraines. But nothing he thought of would work. Some of the Avengers *themselves* couldn't get out of the Raft without help from someone on the outside.

He was desperate.

When they came in to cuff him after lunch, he just couldn't take it anymore. He didn't care that he was underwater and surrounded by people with guns. He had to get *out*.

They went to cuff him, and he bolted out the door and to the elevator.

He slipped past the guards, past Junior (he decided to call the gruff looking guy in charge of him Junior, literally *just* out of spite), and almost made it to the control panel. He reached out to touch it-

That same, horrible agony flared up from his neck and across his entire body. He couldn't escape, he couldn't think, he couldn't breathe, it was just *painpainpain*-

He was suddenly aware of the cold floor against his back as he gasped for air.

He was being dragged somewhere. People were talking around him, but it was like he was listening through five feet of water.

Next thing he knew, he was being thrown into a room even smaller than his cell.

“Welcome to solitary,” Junior yelled at him. “We’ll let you out in a few days.”

The door slammed shut, leaving Peter in total darkness.

Peter never thought he would miss his cell, his thin mattress, the slop, or even Junior. But here he was, wishing for all of them like they were the whole world.

It was completely dark, and completely cold, and completely silent. It was madness on his senses.

He didn’t get bathroom breaks, which didn’t really matter, because they weren’t feeding him, either.

He was so, *so* hungry. His super-metabolism required extra nutrition, and no nutrition was a big no-no. He was practically starving. He hadn’t been this hungry since-

No, don’t think about them. I can’t think about them right now.

Every time his mind wandered, it always found its way to everyone he had left behind. Everyone that thought he was *dead*.

That was the worst part. He remembered the broken looks on everyone’s faces when he saw that funeral tape. He couldn’t comfort them. He couldn’t just swing in, like, “*Hey! I’m alive!*”

Actually, he might as well have *been* dead. He wasn’t exactly living, anymore.

Part of him thought that it was all for show. That they didn’t really miss him. He was a bother. Ned and MJ were probably happy about the extra table space. The Avengers took him in because they pitied him. Tony accepted guardianship of him because he felt like he had to.

And that was the real reason they weren’t looking: they didn’t care.

The idea only made Peter cry harder.

He was let out eventually - with a *sack* over his head. Something about them not wanting him to “learn his way around”.

They led him to his cell, ripped off the sack and cuffs, and slammed the door shut.

His schedule went back to normal.

That's what he was calling this torturous, horrible way they made him live: *normal*.

The idea that this was his new normal sickened him.

He still cried at night when they couldn't see him. Or maybe they could see him with night vision cameras. He honestly didn't care. He was beyond the point of feeling ashamed for crying.

Especially when looking anyone in the eye for even a millisecond resulted in a sharp slap in the face.

The tears were warm on his cheeks. It was still freezing on the Raft.

After he reached day forty-six, he stopped counting.

Any hope he had that they were maybe, just *maybe*, still looking for him was gone.

He cried even harder that night.

It was hard to get out of bed in the morning.

They still made him jump out of bed at the crack of dawn (he assumed; he hadn't seen the sky in what felt like years) before telling him had the morning to himself. Junior now only had to say "Wake up!" before Peter was on his feet.

That didn't mean it was easy.

At one point he tried a hunger strike, maybe for something better than slop, but he just couldn't do it. His super-metabolism wouldn't let him.

The only thing he looked forward to was going to bed.

He dreamt of everyone. He could see their smiles, hear their laughter, feel their reassuring touch. Tony would give him a hug while May told him everything would be all right. MJ would call him over to watch a boring documentary on the couch with him, and Ned would help him not fall asleep as they made ridiculous comments about it.

And he still woke up, no matter how much he didn't want to.

Peter wasn't really living anymore.

He didn't want to be *alive* anymore.

It wasn't like Peter Parker was the kind of person to give up. He always tried his best at everything he did. He always hung onto every single strand of hope he had.

But there *was* no more hope. No hope that he would ever get out of his situation.

Peter Parker had finally given up.

So that's why, when they locked him in the bathroom one day, he made a decision.

He wasn't going to walk out of it.

Photograph

Chapter Summary

We keep this love in a photograph
We made these memories for ourselves
Where our eyes are never closing
Hearts are never broken
And time's forever frozen still

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

When Peter regained consciousness, he was sitting at that same metal desk, in the same metal chair and cuffs that had started everything.

And he didn't even need to guess who was sitting across from him.

"So," Ross said, smirking. "Our little bug finally tried to crush itself."

So it *hadn't* worked, and *wasn't* in hell. That would've been a step *up* from this situation.

Peter didn't really want to think about what he had tried to do. So he just stared at him.

"And you're here because. . .?" he asked, his voice raw from disuse.

Ross sighed. "I need you to understand." He folded his hands on the table and leaned in closer. "We need you alive for our experiments. They won't work with a dead body."

"And you think I care about your *experiments*?" Peter asked, voice shaking from pain and anger. "Nothing on this giant piece of metal makes me want to keep living anymore! You guys ruined - no, *destroyed* my life! I don't give a *f*ck* about your *experiments*!"

Ross stayed stoic throughout his rant even though Peter's voice had risen quite a bit by the end of it, almost reaching hysteria. He was quiet for a while, and his voice was calm when he spoke again.

"Then what do you suggest we do?" Ross asked.

Peter momentarily forgot his anger. "What?"

Ross looked at him with annoyance. "You say nothing in this prison makes you want to live. What would?"

For a moment, he said nothing. "You're . . . You're serious?"

The man nodded. "We can't have you too unhappy, now, can we?"

Peter stared. "Let me go *home*."

Ross sighed. "You know that's not what I meant."

"Contact."

Ross just looked at him.

It was worth a try.

Peter thought for a moment. This was his chance to make his life a bit closer to bearable. He couldn't waste it.

"I have five things."

"Let's hear if they're doable."

Peter took a shaky breath, and went for the easiest one for them to comply to. "I want it to be warmer in the cell."

Ross nodded. "That wouldn't be impossible."

Peter felt a bit of his anxiety disappear. "Better food."

Ross nodded again. "We may be able to do something about that."

He took another breath. "I want something to do in the morning."

Ross smirked. "We could offer you a few pieces of paper and a small pencil every day. We would confiscate them at the end of the day and destroy them, of course, but you would have something to do."

Peter sighed in relief. He was worried that Ross would send him out and never make another deal with him again.

But then he felt his anxiety come back full force. This next one was definitely more personal. "I want pictures."

Ross looked skeptical. "Pictures?"

Peter nodded and started talking as fast as he could while he still had his nerve. "Pictures of everyone I knew. And I want it to be pictures of them smiling. And I want the picture I had hanging above my bed - the group picture of me with the avengers and my friends. It's on - er, it was on my phone - you could just hack the server."

For a moment, it looked like Ross was going to say no. Maybe he would laugh at Peter for thinking he was getting even a bit of comfort and send him back to the same life he had (unfortunately) grown accustomed to.

But Ross finally nodded after what felt like years. "I don't see why we couldn't do that."

Peter slumped with relief. "Thank you."

"You said you had five things. What was the last one?"

Peter sheepishly told him what he wanted.

Ross smirked. "Interesting. I suppose we could make that possible."

Peter nodded. "Can I go now?"

Peter *really* didn't like Ross. Aside from making the Avengers' lives a living hell for about a year, and the fact that he *faked Peter's death and kept him locked up on a glorified boat*, the man made Peter's Spidey-Sense shout at him to get as far away as possible.

Ross turned cold. "I need your word that you will not try what you did again."

Peter glared at him. "I give you my word, but on a completely unrelated note: f*ck you."

Ross stood up and smacked him. "Take him back to his cell. Don't turn up the heat until tomorrow. Let him sleep in the cold."

After Peter was woken up by Junior, he took note of the temperature.

It was . . . warmer.

Maybe Ross *would* keep his word?

His questions were answered when the thin slot on his door opened.

The food was hardly anywhere near cafeteria level quality (that means *not good*), but it was a step up from slop. And a thick envelope was also shoved in with it.

Ignoring the food for a moment, Peter scooped up the envelope and emptied it onto his bed. There were a few blank pieces of paper (like, three eight by eleven sheets), a pencil that was about as long as his thumb, and-

Peter sucked in a breath.

The pictures were *beautiful*.

They had more color than he knew what to do with. The dull gray of the metal, the black and white details, the red of blood, and his mud-blue uniform were the only colors he had seen in what felt like a lifetime. So they almost burned his corneas.

The smiles were so bright on everyone's faces, he found himself smiling for the first time in what felt like an eternity. Tears slipped down his cheeks at the sight of them all.

There was a picture of him and Ned in their decathlon uniforms, smiling in front of a school bus as they got ready to go to a meet. The sun shined so brightly off the yellow that it made him smile even more.

There was a picture of MJ laughing - she hardly ever laughed, and when she did, it was *amazing*. Her eyes lit up in the best way, and the world did too. The sky reflecting in the lake behind her was so shockingly blue that it was hard to look at.

The picture of Tony and Rhodey laughing together was a sight for sore eyes. It was almost like they were there on the Raft with him, giving him a pat on the back to wish him luck on a Spanish test.

Peter's breath caught in his throat at the sight of his family photo - the one with May and Ben.

Peter could almost feel them looking down at him, glad that he could finally experience a bit of happiness again.

The group picture was what really got him, though. It was like having a little chunk of his old home in his new one.

It was the picture Friday had caught of them all playing Monopoly (Tony, the business man, won of course). Everyone was smiling - even Natasha.

Sam and Bucky were both laughing at something Steve had said, their eyes bright with amusement. Clint and Natasha were smiling after a trade that benefited both of them, with something a little bit deeper connecting them, even in the photo.

Bruce was off to the side, smirking at rest of the Avengers' antics. Vision was calling Wanda out as she tried to move the pieces in her favor, her eyes alive with mischief, and his with deep affection. Thor was about to use electricity to shock Scott, who had been tinkering with the leftover metal pieces.

But Peter's favorite part of the picture was in the very center. Peter, Tony, Ned, and MJ were all in the middle of a paper money fight. Peter had been using his advanced aim to throw sheets at Ned, and therefore had been completely oblivious to the sneak attack coming from behind him. Tony and MJ were both holding large sums right behind his head, and the picture had been taken right before they slammed them into his face.

Everyone else had wanted him to burn the picture, but Peter loved it. He got it framed, and it had been hung above his bed before he was. . .

His room was probably a storage closet or something by now.

For a moment, he almost felt like he was *there* - like he wasn't alone in an enormous prison, going through the torturous motions that made him feel like everything was hopeless. Like was actually laughing with his friends, with his *family*.

But, of course, reality had to set back in eventually.

Without taking his eyes off of the photos, he went over to get his only slightly-better food. He still couldn't tell what it was, but at least it tasted a bit better.

He studied those pictures like his life depended on it. In a way, it kind of did. His sanity did, at least. He ignored the paper and pencil for the time being. Soaking up the smiles was enough for the moment (even though he himself had stopped smiling; the pictures were good, but they didn't make him forget that he would never see the people in them ever again).

For the first time in a long time, he was a bit upset when they brought him to the experimental division. He had hid the pictures underneath his mattresses, almost like that would keep them from taking them if they really wanted to.

The original excitement that came with the pictures ended pretty quickly. They were beautiful, but they were Well, they didn't give him anything to do but stare for a few days.

So he eventually started to use the paper and pencil. He would use each sheet for two things: on one side, he would draw one of the pictures he had, and he would write a letter on the back. He would write to everyone and anyone he could think of. It was mostly him just apologizing for

leaving them, and how much he missed them. He also thanked them for the time they spent with him.

But everything was always taken after lunch when they came to get him. He didn't know what they did with them, but Ross said that they would be destroyed.

Nothing he would write or draw would ever get to the people they were made for.

He was getting pretty good at this "art" thing. His drawings were getting to a point where he thought even MJ would be proud of his skill.

But when he thought of her, he usually was overcome by a heck of a lot of guilt. He didn't even get to say goodbye to her . . . or anyone, for that matter (maybe he had said it to Tony, but he hadn't exactly been coherent for that).

He just missed her. So, so much. He missed everyone. He wasn't sure, but sometimes he could almost hear them.

The pictures and pieces of paper helped a little bit for a little while. But now, looking at the pictures for too long made him want to curl up and sob until he couldn't stay awake anymore.

So he only looked at them for a few minutes each day before shoving them under his pillow.

He started to draw other things. Most of his subjects had to do with death. He wished he could've been one of them.

The guards were treating him rougher. They would clamp his cuffs tighter, shove him around more. It was like his deal with Ross had more conditions than he had been told.

They smacked him more often, and for no reason. Punched him in the gut if he took too long to do something. Banged on the glass if he moved too much (even though he hardly moved at all, anymore).

They even set his collar off for fun sometimes. Peter was pretty sure there would be scarring if he ever got it off. But he knew it would probably end up being on his corpse when he eventually died. Maybe they would dump his body in the ocean when that eventually happened.

Sometimes they sent him off to solitary for really small offenses - like not being out of the shower quick enough or not getting out of bed immediately. And he never got more food to make up for the lack of it during those dark days.

He was getting weaker. The food was almost enough for his enhanced metabolism, but it was lacking just enough to make him too weak to fight back (he should know; he tried to overpower a guard one time - okay, a *lot* more than one time - and it went *very badly*). Maybe they were putting something in it.

He hoped it was poison.

At one point he tried to get his collar off. It ended up electrocuting him for even longer than usual. But they surprisingly didn't send him to solitary.

Oh, no. What they did was worse.

It was *so* much worse.

When they took him down to do the experiments, they didn't knock him out.

After many long hours of scalpels, screaming, and agony unlike anything he had ever known, he was hosed down roughly, dressed, and thrown back into his cell. He was in too much pain to shower or get dressed by himself, or even get off of the ground after they slammed the door shut.

He just fell asleep on the floor, curling up in a fetal position as he slipped away, unable to find the energy to cry.

He was pretty sure that if anyone he had known looked at him now, they wouldn't be able to recognize him.

His dreams that night were echoes of his own screams.

He wanted to try it again. What he had done that got him his small comforts in the first place. But he didn't want to risk losing everything he had gained, no matter how small.

And he knew he would fail if he did try it. They had him under twenty-four hour surveillance.

That didn't mean he didn't dream of seeing his aunt and uncle again, and maybe even his parents.

He thought of Tony a lot.

He missed him. So, *so* much. Almost more than anyone else.

They had gotten so close after May's death. While Tony hated to touch anyone else, he had hugged Peter all the time. He would comfort him after he had nightmares, giving him hot chocolate and sitting with him on the couch, one arm around his shoulders.

He was pretty sure Tony wouldn't even remember his *name* at this point. They had all probably gotten over his death *months* ago, and were right back to where they were before Peter barged into their lives.

Peter would trade all of his pictures and paper for a chance to hug him one last time.

Now that they had experimented on him without knocking him out, they didn't stop. The afternoon suddenly became his least favorite part of the day.

Peter was pretty sure that they just liked to hear him scream. He was surprised people didn't hear them in New York. Maybe they did. It wasn't like he had been there recently.

They didn't give him any painkillers whatsoever. And while his healing factor usually had him healed up by morning - not even leaving a scar - he was still sore all the time. And ghost pains from where they had cut into him haunted him almost constantly.

So he was in pain all day, every day. But at least he was so used to it that he could crawl into bed after they chucked him in his cell. He would only get out of it a bit later to eat before getting right back into it.

He was just so tired of pain. He wanted it all to stop.

Maybe they could let someone he knew kill him. Then he could see someone one last time, and it would finally be over.

They had him use bathroom in the morning, now. Junior would wake him up, and he would escort him out alone.

At first, Peter had tried to jump him and take his gun, but that had ended in a session with his collar and almost a week in solitary.

He would never use that time to wonder what he had done to deserve this.

Of course not.

Peter still cried himself to sleep. While the rest of the time he felt detached from reality, the darkness just brought all of the memories from his old life bubbling to the surface.

He missed all of them.

He still looked at the pictures. The ones that included Peter really made him stop to think about how much he had changed. He was *smiling* in those pictures. He couldn't remember the last time he had smiled.

As Peter sat in the dark, he tried not to think about anything but his hunger and body temperature. It might've been warmer in his cell, but it was still *freezing* in solitary.

Dry tears stained his cheeks. His bangs hung in front of his eyes. His fingernails were chewed. His face was dirty.

He didn't care.

A bright light filled the cell, and Peter didn't feel the rush of relief he had felt the first few times he had ended up in solitary. He just felt empty.

"We're trying something new," Junior said, marching towards him.

Those words always meant trouble, so Peter subconsciously flinched away from the approaching figure.

That earned him a quick kick in the ribs. "Get up."

Peter ignored the searing pain in his chest and got to his feet, careful not to make eye contact.

But of course, Junior smacked him anyway. “You move and you’ll be tasting voltage.”

He stood very still (save for his slight trembling) until he saw the needle.

He jumped up onto the ceiling out of pure instinct.

“Get down here.”

Peter shook his head, but he soon found himself writhing on the floor anyway.

By the time they turned the power off, his vision was foggy and he was seeing double. He didn’t have the energy to get away when the needle slipped into his arm.

“Have a nice nap, bug.”

And his vision went dark.

Chapter End Notes

And that wraps up that chapter! I hope it was good! I tried to make it a bit more lighthearted at the beginning.

I think it’s about time we checked back in with our other favorite superheroes.....

Leave a kudos and a comment if you liked it!

Jealous of the Angels

Chapter Summary

You always made my troubles feel so small
And you were always there to catch me when I'd fall
In a world where heroes come and go
Well God just took the only one I know
So I'll hold you as close as I can
Longing for the day, when I see your face again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony and Peter are sitting together at an ice cream shop, and Peter is laughing as he puts whipped cream on his face to match Tony's goatee.

Happy is dropping him off at his apartment again, and this time Tony hugs Peter for real. He laughs at the kid's expression - it's the first time he's actually hugged him.

Peter's calling out to him, begging for him to not let CPS take him away. Tony almost doesn't make it to him before they drag him off to a foster home in another state.

Tony hugs Peter as he cries over his aunt's death. They are sitting together on the couch, and a cheesy movie plays quietly in the background.

Peter is smiling sheepishly as Tony hands him a cup of hot chocolate after a nightmare. He falls asleep on Tony's shoulder, humming softly in his sleep.

Peter is laughing at Rhodey, who is trying to do the Robot in his robotic legs for Just Dance (the kid begged him to download it). Vision ends up beating all of them.

The kid talks with him about the death of his parents, and how he should forgive Steve and Bucky. They both love the kid when they finally meet him for real.

Peter is literally bouncing off of the walls when all the Avengers come to him to ask if he wants to join them. He knows it's not a test this time.

Tony is sitting with Peter in the lab, not really listening to his endless chatter as the kid tinkers with his web shooters. They're both smiling; they're both content.

Everything is suddenly on fire. There's so much smoke, he can hardly see. He's calling out to Peter - he can't find him, but he can hear him yelling for help.

Tony is screaming his name, because Peter can't die, it would destroy him, and he would never be able to live with himself-

Peter is yelling his name, now. He has to get to him, he has to save him, he can't let him down, not again-

“Tony!”

His eyes snapped open, and the blaze was suddenly gone, replaced by total darkness.

“You’re okay, Tony,” Rhodey’s voice said from somewhere near him. “You’re okay.”

I’m okay, Tony thought, remembering where he was. He might’ve been on the Raft, but there was no fire, no one was in danger, and Peter wasn’t-

Peter was still dead.

Tony buried his face in his hands. “I’m sorry I woke you guys up.”

“It’s fine,” Steve said.

“Speak for yourself,” Clint said. “I was in the middle of a dream.”

“*Clint!*” nearly everyone except Tony yelled.

“Jeez, I was just kidding,” Clint said. “Although, it was one of those *really* good-“

“Clint, do not make me send you to Jupiter when we get out of here,” Natasha said.

“Yes, ma’am.”

They were silent for a few moments before Sam said, “Do you want to talk about it?”

“About what?” Tony asked innocently.

“You really should talk about it,” Sam said, like he hadn’t said anything. “We know you miss him, but it isn’t going to get better until you talk to someone.”

No, Tony thought. *It’s never going to get better because I failed him. It’s my fault he’s gone.*

“I’m fine,” he said. “Just go back to sleep. Who knows what Ross wants to show us tomorrow?”

The others were silent for a bit.

“We cared about him, too, you know,” Wanda said at last. “If you ever want to talk about him, we’re here for you.”

“Good *night*,” Tony said.

They didn’t say anything more, so Tony assumed they all went back to sleep.

Tony didn’t. He just lied awake, staring into the complete darkness.

He tossed and turned all night, trying to fall asleep, but he just couldn’t.

All he could see was Peter’s body, dirty from ash as they pulled it out from the collapsed building, the cold March weather not too different from his skin.

Morning came too soon for Tony.

He must've fallen asleep at some point, because the next thing he knew that same guard was shouting outside of their cells.

If I have to hear this guys screeching one more time, Tony thought as he got to his feet, *I'm going to strangle him*.

"Ross will see you before lunch," he told them. "Do not try anything in the meantime, or you'll be dealing with the metal around your necks."

"You're friendly," Clint muttered.

He stopped circling their cells and walked over to Clint's. "Do not test my patience."

"Don't worry. I'll only quiz it."

The guard just stared at him.

Suddenly, Clint was on the ground, grunting and writhing in pain.

Tony looked on in horror as the electrocution from the collar continued. He didn't dare say anything - he didn't want to know what other horrors these people could cook up.

Finally Clint went still, gasping for air. "Shutting up now," he managed to get out in a weak voice.

"Good," the guard grunted. "There will be no more funny business, I assume? Excellent."

After having another set of guards leave 'food' for all of them through the slots on their doors (which Tony - and he assumed the rest of the team - would not even *touch*), he left without another word.

"Clint," Sam immediately said, "you okay?"

He just grunted in response.

"That's great," Scott said. "Real great."

"That was so," Clint said between gasps, ". . . much worse . . . than yesterday."

Well, that settled it.

Tony *hated* this place.

"We'll get out of this eventually," he said. "You can't just kidnap the Avengers and hope the world doesn't notice."

"I hope so," Rhodey's disembodied voice said. "But yeah. Someone's bound to notice something."

"But even if they *do* notice," Scott said, "what will they be able to do about it?"

"You'd be surprised by amount of power the public has," Steve said. "The government was initially created to serve the people."

"And people can do a h*ll of a lot of tweeting," Bucky said. Then added under his breath, "Whatever that means."

"I really need to get you guys up to date on technology," Tony said.

"Good luck," Bucky said, tapping the glass. "T'Challa tried, but he gave up. We're a lost cause."

"Oh, I know," Tony said with a smirk. "I just like a challenge."

It got a bit quiet after that.

"Well, this has been fun," Sam said, breaking the awkward silence, "but I really want to talk about how we're going to murder Ross when he gets here."

"When we finally get out of here," Wanda said, "I'm going to rip this place into shrapnel and leave it *and* Ross to rot at the bottom of the ocean."

"Amen," Clint said with a nod, still on the floor.

"I still can't believe he *actually* captured us," Steve said. "How did we not see that trap from a mile away?"

"Well, we didn't," Tony said. "I don't see the point in dwelling on the past. Live for the future, right? And don't follow that advice literally, since you so clearly don't care about the effects time travel has on politics. I mean, you just dive straight into the ice-"

"Tony, if you don't shut up," Natasha said, "I'm going to rip through this glass and smack you."

"The reason I care is because we should've seen it coming," Steve said. "We're getting too predictable."

"I think that hardly matters in our present situation, Steve," Bucky said. "Ross is coming soon, and we have no idea what he's planning."

"I'm with him," Scott said.

"And we're not going to know until he gets here," Clint said. "Now can we please tone it down a bit? These hearing aids they gave me only have one setting, and it's too high. And I unfortunately can't take them out."

"Sorry," Sam said. "You okay? You still haven't gotten off of the floor."

"I'm fine. Just chilling down here where the heating vent is. It's cold."

"No sh*t, Sherlock," Tony said.

"Just stating a fact," Clint said. "So can we keep the fighting down?"

"We weren't fighting," Steve said at the same time Tony said, "Sure thing."

Natasha rolled her eyes. "I miss being able to leave the room."

"At least you can walk," Wanda said from where she was on her bed. Her arms were still in a straight jacket, which had to suck. But her legs were free.

"I bet you could walk if you really tried," Tony said with a smile.

"I already *have*," she said. "Back when I first ended up on this hunk of metal."

Tony had completely forgotten that some of them had already been imprisoned there. He glanced at Sam, Scott, and Clint before turning his attention back to her. "It wouldn't hurt to try again."

Wanda shrugged, trying to stand up, but fell over. "This is humiliating."

"Well, you know what they say," Tony said. "Try, try again."

"Since when did you start spilling middle school motivation?" Rhodey asked.

"Since I started hanging out with people under thirty." He tried not to think about the other young Avenger with that statement, but the pain still settled in over his chest.

(Or rather, he became more aware of it. It never really left.)

Regardless, he still put on a fake smile when Wanda tried again, successfully balancing this time. "See? It's almost like you've been walking your whole life. How long was that again? Five, six years?"

"You're hilarious," Wanda said as she sat back down.

The chatter went on for a while after that, dying and awkwardly being brought back. Tony paid attention for the most part, but his mind kept wandering to his dream.

He hadn't had a dream like that in a while. He still thought of the kid all the time, and had dreams about him, but he hadn't dreamt of the fire in what felt like a month. It was usually just memories of the kid.

Memories that made him want to jump off of a bridge or throw himself in front of a truck.

(Of course, the one time he tried something like that, the entire team had stopped him and hadn't left him alone for two months.)

He just shook his head, almost like that would get rid of the thoughts that plagued his mind.

"You okay?" Sam asked, looking straight at him.

I haven't been okay since I picked up that phone call from Steve.

"Yeah," Tony lied. "I'm fine."

When Ross stepped out of the elevator in all of his disgusting glory, all of the chatter died almost instantly.

"Am I really such a big deal that you all stopped your conversations for me?" he said with a smirk.

"F*ck you, Ross," Tony said with a sneer.

For some reason, Ross just laughed. "Oh, I do love irony." He paused, walking up to Wanda's cell. "And how are you liking your confinement?"

Wanda just gave him the death glare.

"Anyway," Ross said, walking away from her, clearly a bit creeped out. Wanda was smirking.

He came walking up to Tony's cell. "How are you doing with the death of that boy?" Ross asked. "Peter, wasn't it?"

Tony pretended like his heart didn't stop, settling for a glare instead. "How about we get to the reason we're here? The reason *you're* here?"

"Of course," Ross said with a smile, almost like he knew something Tony didn't. He started circling the cells. "I'm here to show you something. Something that will interest all of you."

"I doubt that," Clint said with a yawn. "I have high expectations."

"Oh, I believe you," Ross said. "And this will meet all of them. But first . . ."

He stopped in front of Sam's cell and looked back over to Tony. "We need to make a little switch. Can I trust you two boys to not try anything if I let you out?" he asked, gesturing to him and Sam.

"You can trust me about as much as I trust you," Tony said with a growl.

"Oh, I know that. Can we get a few guards in here?" he said, pressing a finger to his ear.

As if on cue, at least ten enormous guards came marching out of the elevator.

With a nod from Ross, half of them went for Tony's cell while the other half went for Sam's. They opened the door, seized him despite his struggling, dragged him out and past an equally unwilling Sam, and threw him in the new cell. The door slammed shut behind him.

"Excellent," Ross said as the guards marched out. "I wanted you to have a good view."

"You're *literally* standing in the *middle* of the room," Tony said. "I can see you the same way from every direction."

"Not me," Ross said with a shake of his head. "This." He gestured to the cell that was now directly across from Tony.

"Hate to break it to you," he said, talking to him like he would a very small child, "but it's kind of empty."

Ross ignored him and put a finger to his ear again. "Bring him in."

Not even a moment later, the elevator doors were opening, and the same guard that woke them up came marching in, dragging a body in behind him.

Tony went to see who it was, but a black sack was pulled over his head.

"Meet our resident prisoner," Ross said with a smile as the guard opened the cell door and threw him inside, letting him collapse onto the floor.

Ouch, Tony thought. *That had to hurt.*

"Who is he?" Steve asked.

"And why would I tell you that?" Ross said. "That would ruin the fun."

"Is there a reason you're making this seem like a big deal?" Clint asked. "It's one person. And they're not even the Queen of England, so . . ."

"Believe me, it *is* a big deal," Ross said with a smile.

The body was relatively small, like it belonged to someone young. Tony hoped that wasn't the case, but he knew it wasn't very likely. Why would Ross want to capture someone young? (Well, Wanda was young, but she was an Avenger.)

"How long has he been here?" Tony asked.

"Oh, about half a year," Ross said nonchalantly.

Tony started. "And he's been alone this whole time?"

Ross smiled. "All alone, with no one to talk to. I'm surprised he hasn't gone insane." He started walking to the elevator. "I'll be back in a few days to answer any questions you may have. He'll probably wake up sometime this afternoon." He then added as an afterthought, "And he may be a bit . . . *unresponsive*."

"And what is *that* supposed to mean?" Sam asked.

Ross smirked. "His cell has been specially programmed. He won't be able to see or hear you."

Tony looked over the mysterious man lying on the floor. He couldn't imagine not having anyone to talk to for that long. It would drive him crazy.

And he wouldn't be getting anyone to talk to anytime soon, apparently.

"Have a nice life," Ross said as the elevator doors closed.

No one said anything for a moment.

"Well *that* was interesting," Clint finally announced.

"Who do you think it is?" Steve asked no one in particular. "Who would Ross want to capture?"

"Six months ago Do you think it was before or after he was fired?" Natasha asked.

"Do you think lunch is anytime soon?" Scott asked.

"Wow," Tony said. "That was heartfelt."

"What? I'm hungry."

"I agree with the bug," Clint said.

"Thank you, birdbrain, for that *glorious* nickname," Scott deadpanned.

As if on cue, the elevator doors opened again with a few guards ready to give them the same crap they had been dishing out.

Tony really didn't want to eat the slop, but he was *starving*. So he brought the utensil to his mouth and took a hesitant bite.

It was absolutely *disgusting*, and it made him want to throw up, but he ate all of it.

He looked back over to the man on the ground. He couldn't fathom eating this stuff more than *once*, and yet this guy had been eating it for *six months*.

Six months with no one to talk to. Six months of living in this sh*thole. Six months of putting up with that screeching guard.

He felt sorry for the guy.

“I officially want my coffee more than anything right now,” Tony said as he almost gagged.

When Peter regained consciousness, he was lying on the floor of what he assumed to be his cell with that same stupid sack over his head. He was surprised they had let him wake up on his own and not by means of punching or kicking.

He grunted in pain as he stood up, ripping the sack off his head and throwing it on the floor (the move reminded him too much of his old mask). He collapsed onto his bed, rubbing his face with his hands.

He was pretty sure it was mid afternoon, only because of the two guards outside of the elevator. They worked in shifts, and Peter had memorized their faces.

He realized with a flip of his empty stomach that he had missed lunch, and would have to wait a few more hours before he getting anything to eat.

His glanced over to the other cells, empty as ever, before resting his back against the wall.

At least I'm not screaming in pain right now, he thought as he let his mind wander.

Tony was lying on his bed, staring at the ceiling with nothing particular on his mind when it suddenly got very quiet.

The conversations between everyone had been coming and going, so he didn't think anything of the long silence that had fallen over their cells.

That is, until he heard Clint say in a very low voice, “What *the f*ck*?”

“What?” Tony asked. “What happened?”

No one answered him for a moment.

“Tony,” Steve said very slowly, “I think I know why Ross made the prisoner a big deal.”

“No *sh*t*,” Bucky said.

Tony had to know what it was that made all of the Avengers completely dumbfounded.

So, when he got up, he was met with a sight that he wouldn't have seen coming if it had punched him in the gut.

Which, ironically, is how he felt when he saw him.

The man was sitting on the bed, staring at the wall.

Only it wasn't a man.

It was a kid.

His kid.

Chapter End Notes

... sorry?

Please don't be mad 0~0

I've been planning this to go that way for a while. The whole "peter can't see anyone else cause I'm mean" thing. Sorry about the cliffhanger. Express your anger in the comments if you have it.

If you haven't yet, listen to Jealous of the Angels. It made me cry. It took me a long time to decide what song I was going to use for this one, but I think I made the right choice.

Thanks so much for reading!

Tears In Heaven

Chapter Summary

Time can bring you down
Time can bend your knees
Time can break your heart
Have you begging please
Begging please

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony didn't understand what he was seeing.

He just kept staring, blinking rapidly like that would change what he saw, but the image stayed the same.

Peter was sitting there - *alive*.

People were talking all around him, but he wasn't listening. Peter was right there. He was just *sitting* there, without a care in the world. He was blinking at the wall, and he was *alive*.

*Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive
Peter's alive Peter's alive Peter's alive-*

"Peter," he eventually choked out, and he barely even noticed that he was leaning against the glass towards him.

When he didn't respond, Ross' words came back to him like a smack in the face.

"He won't be able to see or hear you."

"Peter," he said again, only louder. *"Peter!"*

He kept yelling his name like a mantra, getting louder and louder until he finally heard the others.

"He can't hear you!" Rhodey's voice stuck out like a sore thumb. "He can't hear you, Tony!"

He realized that they had been trying to get his attention for a while, and he stopped shouting, and instead just soaked up Peter's image.

"I'm sorry," he choked out. He collapsed onto his bed without taking his eyes off his kid.

He didn't care that he was on the Raft. He didn't care that the chances of escaping were slim.

Peter was *alive*, and he was sitting less than twenty feet away from him.

But he was suddenly agreeing with Clint's earlier words. Because honestly - what the *actual f*ck*?

"How is this *possible*?" he asked.

"I have *no* idea," Steve said.

"Maybe it's a mass hallucination," Scott said in a rapid voice. "I've heard of that happening sometimes. Or - or maybe Ross hired an actor that looks like him. He could do that, right?"

"I *don't* think that's it," Clint said.

"It's *not* possible," Sam said. "Peter's *dead*."

"Well, he's clearly not!" Tony shouted as he threw his hands up, ignoring the pain that came with the word 'dead'. He put a hand to his mouth and choked back a sob that threatened to breach his throat. "He's *alive*. God, he's *actually alive*."

"We can see that, Tony," Clint said. "But how the *f*ck* is he here? We - we *buried* him!"

"Ross could've faked his death," Bucky said. "It's not impossible for people to think you're dead when you're not."

"Ross faked his death . . ." Tony muttered.

Ross had taken him. Ross had faked Peter's death, and then he *took* him.

He really wanted to strangle the guy. He wanted to *murder* him.

"Are you honest-to-god telling me," Sam said with a hand over his eyes as he leaned against the glass, "that *Peter f*cking Parker* is in the cell next to me?"

"And *me*?" Natasha said with more emotion than she had shown the entire time they had been there.

"Yes," Clint said as he ran his fingers through his hair. "He is."

"And he's *alive*?" Natasha asked.

"Yes," Clint said again. "I don't know *how*, but he *is*."

"My god," Sam said, sitting down and rubbing his temples.

Everyone sat in stunned silence, still trying to process the boy in front of them that they had previously thought to be dead.

Tony still couldn't believe it.

"Okay," Steve said seriously, "we can't know the details until Ross gets back. He's alive, and that's about as much as we can figure at this point."

"Well, there's one other thing," Natasha said.

"And that would be?" Tony asked, still staring at Peter.

She was silent for a moment before answering. "He's been alone here - for *six months*."

*F*ck.*

Tony's brain hadn't even *gotten* that far. He had been so focused on the fact that Peter was right in front of him - *alive* - that he hadn't stopped to think about the implications of that.

But now that he had started to think about them, he couldn't stop.

Peter had been alone for almost half a *year*.

Half a year without anyone. Half a year without love. Half a year of waking up to an empty cell. Half a year with the threat of that collar around his neck - which Tony noticed with a twist of his gut.

Had he been electrocuted? What had they done to him? Did they ever hurt him more than they already had by locking him up?

The idea of anyone hurting Peter made him want to cry a river and punch Ross in the face at the same time.

Does he know that we thought he was dead?

The realization that Peter could've known that made him suck in a shaky breath.

He hoped not.

The idea of Peter, sitting alone in a cell - thinking no one was coming for him - made him want to throw up.

Now that he thought about it, Peter looked *terrible*.

His face was pale and expressionless. His hair was dirty and bloody (he noticed that part with a pang in his chest). And he was so *thin* - like they weren't feeding him enough. He looked so out of place in his blue uniform, with his eyes sunken and dull. So unlike the last time he had seen his eyes: full of life and energy; *happiness*.

He was ripped from his thoughts as Peter suddenly moved. The chatter the boy's presence had brought about died almost instantly, everyone waiting to see what he was doing.

Peter looked over at the guards, shifted in his bed, and reached under his pillow. He pulled something small out, and Tony had to squint to see it, but there was no mistaking them.

"Are those . . ." Wanda said quietly.

"Yeah," Tony said through the lump in his throat. "They are."

"They're what?" Sam asked.

"Pictures." Tony shook his head a bit. "He has *pictures* of us."

And he did. They were small, and a bit muted in color, but he had about half a dozen photos of people he loved.

He shuffled through them, and Tony caught glimpses of Ned, MJ, May, Ben, Rhodey, and himself (his heart stopped when he saw that). But then Peter stopped shuffling when he got to a particular

picture, and Tony stopped breathing.

It was that same stupid picture Friday had caught of them playing Monopoly. He had almost taken it and burned it when the kid printed it out, but it had made the kid so happy that he just couldn't say no to framing it for his room.

But now Peter brought an unsteady hand to his mouth as he stared longingly at the picture. Tears slipped down his cheeks as he started shaking.

He dropped the pictures all over the floor before burying his face in his hands, his body racked with sobs.

Tony couldn't see the others' broken expressions - Wanda trying not to let tears fall, Clint with his head in his hands, Steve with his face towards the back of his cell, Natasha with wet eyes that she would deny later - through his own tears.

Peter had eventually fallen asleep, and Tony and the rest of the Avengers hadn't said anything since.

He didn't want to know what they had done to him to make him seem so *broken* - almost more like a shell of what he was six months ago. Didn't want to know how they had damaged him in unforgivable ways.

But wasn't locking him up with no contact with the outside world enough to do that on its own?

(So maybe they *hadn't* hurt him physically?)

(The blood in his hair, the bags under his eyes, and the way the guard threw him into the cell suggested otherwise.)

Tony would spend the rest of his life in this prison if it meant Peter could go free. Or even to let him see him - if even for just a moment - to let him know he wasn't alone.

It hurt so much, being able to see his small form lying on the bed. He could only look at him, unable to go to him, unable to hug him, and unable take him home - to make it so none of this ever happened.

But Tony could only stare at Peter's form as he twisted in his sleep, clearly in the middle of a nightmare. Of what, Tony could only guess. But his face was scrunched in pain, and he was thrashing so much that it physically hurt Tony.

Peter shot up suddenly, screaming for moment before clamping a hand over his mouth.

Tony didn't understand why he did that. At least, not until after one of the guards came marching over to his cell, banging on the glass.

"I'm sorry," he choked out at the guard before they went back to their post.

Tony was seeing red.

Peter had *apologized*, to the *guard*, about having a *nightmare*.

He was shaking with terror, and they made him *apologize*.

"I'm going to f*cking *kill* Ross," he said with a growl.

"I'll help you," Bucky said with an equally menacing tone.

Just then the elevator doors opened, and more guards stepped out with what he supposed would be 'dinner'.

He really missed coffee.

Peter didn't stir, so he assumed he couldn't see them as they delivered the slop to the other Avengers.

Not too soon after they left, the same guard that seemed to be in charge of them came waltzing in with food for Peter. Tony didn't know whether to be thankful or discouraged when it looked better than the food they had been given. Was it because he had been there for so long?

"Hey, how come he gets better food?" Clint asked. "I feel like I'm being cheated."

The guard didn't give him a second glance.

After an uneventful meal (except for the part where he noticed Peter eating like his life depended on it, like he was starving), they had a little bit of time to talk before the lights went out. They didn't use it; they just kept staring at the boy in disbelief.

When the lights finally did go out, he sadly wasn't surprised by the light sniveling coming from the cell across from his.

He was surprised, however, after the crying stopped. He assumed that his kid had fallen asleep, but apparently not.

"Is he . . ." Sam said, "*singing*?"

Tony was shocked. He had no idea the kid could sing - that he could sing so *beautifully*. The most musical thing the kid had ever done was listen to hours of pop music through his headphones - well, he had assumed it was pop, but now he wasn't so sure.

So suddenly sounding better than most of the singers he had ever heard in his life certainly caught him off guard.

He was singing quietly, soothingly. He wasn't sure what the song was called, but the lyrics were about wanting to see loved ones again. There was even a verse about wanting to go home.

Tony tried to pretend a lump didn't form in his throat.

Peter kept singing different melodies, all of them having to do with missing people and feeling alone. He eventually broke into fresh sobs, and he soon fell asleep.

No one said anything.

"Wow," Scott said after a long period of silence. "Just . . . wow."

"I couldn't do that even if I wanted to," Clint said. He then tried to break into one of the songs Peter had been singing, and failing miserably. He was more *tone* deaf than he *was* deaf.

But he was soon grunting in pain, and Tony realized with a twist of his gut that he was being electrocuted.

A sharp "No singing!" came from the speakers.

"No . . . fair," Clint gasped.

"Just go to bed, birdbrain," Natasha deadpanned, but the concerned undertone of her voice was still there.

"I'm fine, thanks for asking," he mumbled.

It got quiet after that.

"Did you know he could sing, Tones?" Rhodey asked.

"No," he said with a shaky voice. "I didn't."

The next morning was almost the same as the last.

The same guard was outside of their cells, and Tony was really starting to learn what it was like to loathe someone's voice.

Peter didn't wake up, so he assumed that the guard was filtered out by his cell (he would really have to study the technology later).

But then the other cells were suddenly empty, and the guard was standing outside of Peter's cell, who was the only one still visible.

"Get up!" he yelled.

Tony felt like he had been punched in the gut when Peter immediately leapt to his feet quickly and quietly with a blank expression on his face.

But then he was opening Peter's cell and handcuffing him. Peter made no move to stop him - he even turned around and put his hands behind his back on his own, not even flinching as the cold metal dug into his wrists and clamped shut.

As Tony watched the guard guide Peter out with his gun trained on his back, he felt like he was going to break. The kid was so . . . *compliant*. He didn't even *try* to stop what was going on.

How long ago did he break?

His train of thought stopped when Peter tripped over his feet a bit.

He caught a quick glance of Peter's terrified eyes before the guard whipped him around and hit him in the face so hard that he collapsed.

Tony was pounding on the glass, screaming at them, but he knew it was no use. They couldn't see him; they couldn't hear him. He couldn't break the glass. But he really didn't care.

He hurt Peter.

And based on the way he hauled Peter up - who didn't even bat an eyelash even though his face was bleeding, who let himself get shoved into the elevator - it had *happened before*.

Multiple times.

Tony fell to his knees in front of the glass and put his face in his hands, trying not to break down.

It was a few moments later that he heard the tentative voice of Rhodey. "Tones? You okay?"

He choked back a sob. "Oh, yeah. I'm perfectly fine. Thanks for asking."

"Tony-"

"Did you not see what they *did*?" Tony's voice was shaking. "They've been treating him like this for who *knows* how long!"

"And we'll get out of this eventually," Steve said. "We won't leave without him."

"We *better* not leave without him," Tony said. "God, what if they're hurting him now?"

"I doubt he would've gone so willingly if that was the case," Natasha said. "Trust me."

Well, that was true. Peter hardly ever listened to him when he really didn't want to (a certain ferry incident came to mind). It was annoying at times, but Tony was suddenly thankful for the kids stubbornness.

Not even fifteen minutes later Peter returned, but this time he had wet hair and a clean face. Tony breathed a sigh of relief; he was only taken to the bathroom.

Breakfast was delivered again, and Tony wasn't even sure what to think when Peter got a pencil and an envelope of paper.

"You guys are holding out on us," Clint whined as the guard walked out.

Tony watched as Peter drew and wrote. He didn't know what he was writing, but the pictures he drew made him want to throw up.

"He's been here too long," he heard someone say as Peter drew images that were too dark for the once-bright teenager.

All this time, Tony had thought Peter to be dead. While he had been crying over a bottle of Vodka, Peter had been sitting alone in a cell. When Tony had lit a candle for Peter's sixteenth birthday, Peter might've been smacked across the face. While Tony had been leaving flowers at his grave, Peter had been crying himself to sleep.

Tears spilled over his cheeks as he looked at his kid, who was still quietly drawing.

They came for him after lunch.

It wasn't just the one guard this time. It was at least half a dozen, all of them armed.

The way Peter started trembling with wide eyes made Tony's heart stop.

He was visibly far less willing to go with them this time. They trained their guns on him as they

opened the door, and Peter got to his feet shakily. They had to turn him around this time to cuff him, jerkily forcing his hands behind his back. He didn't stop shaking even as the elevator doors closed.

"What were you saying about him going willingly?" Tony asked with a quivering voice.

"I'm sorry," Natasha said grimly.

After many long hours of torturous guessing, they finally brought Peter back.

It was just the one guard and Peter that stepped out of the elevator - only the latter was being *dragged*.

He no longer was handcuffed, but he was barely conscious. The guard was gripping him on his upper arm, supporting most of his weight. He threw him in the cell and didn't spare him a second glance as the door slammed shut.

Peter groaned as he stood up on shaky legs, hugging himself around his middle. After a bit of stumbling, he collapsed onto the bed with a whimper, his eyes half closed.

His hair was matted with blood. His face was bruised. He wouldn't stop shaking.

They're torturing him.

Tony actually threw up this time.

The lights went out after dinner. Tony couldn't take his eyes off Peter's trembling form as the kid scarfed down his food before crawling right back under the covers, just like how he used to get in bed back at home.

And like he would when they got back. They *would* get home. Tony was sure of that.

His escape plan was easy. Too easy, really. And a little ridiculous. But also awesome. He wasn't sure why he didn't just do it right when they got there, but he was glad he had waited. They could've left without Peter.

But before he could do anything now, though, he had to know why Ross was doing this. Why he had kidnapped Peter and faked his death.

He was going to kill him after that.

The kid didn't sing that night. He didn't cry, either. He didn't shove his face in his pillow to hide the fact that he was sobbing from his teammates. He didn't spend hours thinking about how much of a failure he was.

But someone else did.

So. I updated!

The reason it took so long... blame Infinity War. It bROKE ME. SHATTERED. DEAD. I AM DEAD.

This story throws that entire thing out the fudging window. Thanos was never born. Good? Good.

But no spoilers in the comments, please. Thanos still demands your silence.

The song this time wasn't the best, but I liked that particular bunch of lyrics. So I figured, what the heck.

I realize there were a lot of italics in this chapter. Whatever. Idc.

I hope you liked it. It took a bit of time to write this one.

Be sure to leave your thoughts below! Thank you for reading!

Wait For It

Chapter Summary

Death doesn't discriminate

Between the sinners and the saints

It takes

and it takes

and it takes

Chapter Notes

Trigger warnings for suicidal themes.

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Ross came the next morning.

"I trust you had a good time with our prisoner yesterday?" he said as he stepped out of the elevator with a smug grin on his face.

Tony was out of bed in an instant. The other Avengers were all yelling their own profanities, but his attention was on the man in front of him. "Why?" He pounded his fist on the glass. "*Why?*"

Ross smiled. "I thought you of all people would know why."

Tony glared. "You know what? I don't. I *don't* know why you would kidnap a f*cking child and keep him locked up in an isolated prison. Please enlighten me."

Ross kept smiling. "The Sokovian Accords were documents that perfectly balanced justice and order. They were designed to keep enhanced individuals in their place. And because of you, they are no longer enforced. I lost my position of power and the respect my colleagues had for me."

"That's great and all," Tony interrupted. "But what the f*ck does it have to do with my kid?"

Ross smiled. "Absolutely nothing."

"Then why are you wasting our time?" Clint asked. "I could've been at the golf course right now. Tell us why you found this whole thing necessary."

"That's a simple question," Ross said. He was walking around the center like a vulture circling its prey. "It was all of you who made the Accords illegal. You took something I cared about, and you *broke* it. So I returned the favor."

Tony tried to ignore the implication of a broken Peter. He tried *so* hard.

But he knew it was true. That kid in the cell wasn't the bright teenager that he had known six months ago.

"So this is *revenge*?" Wanda asked incredulously. "You kidnapped and tortured a child for *revenge*?"

Ross shook his head. "We don't torture him. We experiment."

Tony fought down bile. "Do you give him pain medicine? Because it sure didn't look like you did yesterday."

Ross smiled. He hated that smile. "Not since he tried to rip his collar off."

Tony looked over at Peter's sleeping form, and felt pride bloom in his chest at the idea of him not just sitting there and accepting his fate.

But that pride was quickly dwarfed by horror as soon as he thought of his kid being *cut open while he was awake*.

He suddenly realized why Peter had woken up screaming.

"You sick b*st*rd," Clint growled.

"You should hear him," Ross said. "Screaming for all of you through the agony. But he screams for you the most, Stark. It's humbling, to hear a child shriek and beg."

Oh *god* . . .

"How did you do it?" Tony asked, desperate to get those images out of his head. "How did you take him?"

"That was easy. Switching out the chemicals in his classroom was simple, and the fumes from the blast sedated him enough for us to switch his body out for a fake. Our men infiltrated the autopsy, as well."

Despite the pain, Tony was seeing red. "You're despicable."

"Oh, and I almost forgot," Ross said. "That phone call that's been hanging over your head for the past six months? Didn't matter. Even if you had picked up the phone, you would have been too late."

"Tony," Steve asked slowly after a bit of silence, "what is he talking about?"

"Yeah," Tony demanded. "What *are* you talking about?"

Ross smirked. "We breached the cell waves. The call didn't come through on your phone until we were long gone."

Tony felt faint.

All of that time filled with regret for not picking up, and it had been for *nothing*.

“Tony,” Natasha insisted. “What phone call?”

It became clear that Tony wasn't going to answer himself, so Ross did. “Peter called Tony the day he was taken. He was heavily sedated at the time, so the message didn't make much sense, but Tony didn't pick up the phone in time. It's sad, really. I understand why he didn't tell you.”

Tony looked around at his team members, guilt flaring in his chest at their shocked and betrayed expressions. He looked away.

“So,” Ross said to the stunned Avengers. “What other questions do you have?”

They were silent before Clint answered. “How come he gets better food? And gets to sing?”

“*Clint*,” Sam hissed.

“And pictures,” Scott said, no doubt thinking of his daughter. “Don't forget the pictures.”

“Or just ask away,” Sam grumbled.

“And the paper,” Wanda said. “Not that it would matter to me . . .” she added under her breath.

“Oh,” Ross said with a smile. “I was hoping the deal would be brought up.”

“*Deal?*” Tony demanded.

“Oh, yes,” Ross said. “He gets all of those things, and the heat in here was also turned up.”

“You're *kidding*,” Clint deadpanned. “It used to be *colder* in here?”

“Indeed,” Ross said. “But the more interesting part is what I got in return.”

Tony didn't want to know what Peter had given up. A part of his freedom? Information?

Something else?

“Which *was* . . .” Cap asked with the same hesitation Tony was feeling.

There was a moment of silence before Ross answered with a cold smile on his face. “His life.”

It took a moment for him to understand.

When he did, Tony wanted to *die*.

“He-he tried to . . .” someone said through an ocean of water.

“Oh, yes,” Ross said, his voice just as distant. “Two, three months ago? Can't remember the details . . .”

Tony stopped listening. He fell back onto the bed with a dazed thud.

No. No. No.

He couldn't fathom it.

This can't be real.

This wonderful, energetic teenager that he loved more than life itself had tried to end his own.

No. Can't be real.

Ross had broken Peter to the point of self destruction.

No this can't be real please please please-

And this was months ago, he realized as he stared at the teen with wide eyes.

No.

Please.

A fist against the glass door of his cell yanked him out of his thoughts. "You still with us, Stark?" Ross asked.

Tony stood up and growled. "When I get out of here, I will tear you apart in such a horrible and slow way that even death itself will be unable to harm you more than I have."

"That's where you're wrong," Ross said. "I'm leaving this place tomorrow. I know it won't take long for the world to realize its heroes are missing, and it won't take long for them to find you. But it will be too late by the time they do."

Before Tony could ask what he meant or give a snarky comeback (not that he could think of one through all of the weight in his chest), the other Avengers disappeared from his view. The only one he could see was Peter, who was oblivious to Ross as he walked over to him.

"Wake up, bug," Ross said with a false sense of gentleness.

Even though the words were soft, Peter leapt to his feet with the same blank expression on his face he had had yesterday. Seeing that nothingness in his eyes hurt so much more now that he knew he had

But the kid's face quickly turned to horror.

"*You*," he said with wide eyes, but he wasn't looking at Ross' face. "Why are you . . ."

"I'm here to tell you something," Ross said. "Please, sit."

Peter shakily sat down on the metal stool. "What?"

His voice was tired, like he just wanted all of his torment to be over.

"We have concluded our experiments," Ross said with a smile.

Peter's eyes got a little wide, but he didn't react other than that. "Does this mean I can go home?" he asked with something akin to hope.

Tony had never wanted to give someone what they wanted more than he did right then.

Ross just shook his head. “We can’t have everyone knowing you’re alive, now, can we?”

Well, that was complete *bullsh*t*.

But Peter didn’t know that almost all of the Avengers were watching this conversation.

“Oh,” was all he said as he continued to look at the floor. He didn’t seem surprised. Tony felt his heart break a little more than it had already.

“But it means we no longer need you alive.”

What?

Peter looked up at him, but he didn’t meet his eyes. “. . . what?”

“The deal’s off,” Ross said.

It was a moment before Peter reacted. “N-no.” He shook his head as he stared at him in shock, finally making eye contact. The broken look in his eyes almost killed Tony more than the idea of him Seeing him like this made him want to curl up on the bed and sob.

“I’ll need those pictures back.”

His kid’s broken voice cut through Tony like a knife. “You-you *can’t* We had a *deal*—”

“No more ‘better food’ or paper, either,” Ross said. “And the heating bill has gone up, so that has to end. And no more singing.”

Peter kept shaking his head, looking absolutely *crushed* as tears began to form in his eyes. “*Please* don’t take this away. It’s all I *have*—“

“No,” Ross cut in, glaring. “You don’t ‘have’ or ‘get’ *anything*. You’re just a boy the world believes is *dead*. How long do you think it took for them to get over your death?”

So that was it.

Peter did know. And the broken look in his eyes told Tony that *he thought no one missed him*.

Ross was right up against the glass, staring at Peter with cold eyes. “This metal cage is all you have, and all you’ll have for the rest of your pathetic existence.”

Peter had tears streaming down his face. “I - I-“

“You’re what, bug?” Ross hissed. “You’re what?”

The kid didn’t answer.

“You’re *nothing*,” Ross said. “You never *were* anything. So you don’t *get* anything.”

“I-I’m *sorry*,” Peter said as he looked down at the ground. He hugged his midsection tightly, his body starting to shake as he tried to control his sobs.

Tony wanted to *murder* Ross. He wanted to make him *bleed*. To see *fear* in his eyes.

But he couldn’t think about any of that. His kid was sitting so *close* to him, crying his eyes out, and

Tony couldn't do *anything*.

He had failed Peter in a way he couldn't come back from.

He could only watch as that same guard marched in and opened Peter's cell door. He grabbed Peter off of the stool and, despite his struggling, shoved him against the wall.

Ross walked in and reached under his pillow. "You really need to think of more clever hiding places."

Peter still had tears in his eyes as he tried to fight against the guard, but he clearly wasn't strong enough. They had to have been mildly sedating him. "Please . . ."

Ross took them out and started shuffling through them. "It's amazing what a bit of ink can do," he said as he ripped one up, letting the tiny remains fall to the ground.

No.

"Please, *stop*," Peter begged as he fought against the guard even harder. Every one of his movements made Tony's heart ache.

"You have terrible taste in women," he said as he ripped up the photo of MJ.

"Please-"

"I don't understand why you even look these," Ross said as he ripped up even more of them, including the one of Tony. "No one misses you."

I miss you more than anything. I'd give everything to hold you right now.

"I-"

"A picture's worth a thousand words, they say," he said as he held the last photo in his hands. It was the group picture. "Can you tell me about this one? I might even let you keep it."

Peter whimpered. The sound made Tony's stomach flip. "It's a picture of me with my old family."

Old family. As if he wasn't still a part of it.

"We're all having fun in this picture," he said with an almost happy tone. "Everyone is smiling in it. That's why I liked it so much."

Tony wanted to bundle up this kid's innocence and share it with the whole world. No, scratch that; he would just keep him for himself. Peter didn't need anymore pain the world would throw at him.

He was too good for this sh*t. He was too good to be locked up. He was too f*cking good for torture.

He was too good to die. He was too good to do it himself.

But death didn't care how good he was, and Ross didn't either.

The man smiled. "That's very touching, but I'm afraid I have to do this anyway."

He ripped the picture to pieces before walking out of the cell without a second glance. The guard released a now sobbing Peter from the wall, who collapsed onto the floor by the pile of what used

to be his photographs.

Peter clutched the broken photos to his chest as the door slammed shut. “*Why?*” he asked through his tears. “What do you *want* from me?”

Ross smirked. “Nothing, anymore. Which means you don’t have to uphold your end of the bargain, either.”

Tony stopped breathing.

Please no.

Peter looked up. “What?”

“We only needed you alive for the experiments. I honestly couldn’t care less, now.”

Peter looked pale. “You’re going to kill me.” It wasn’t a question.

Ross shook his head. “We’re going to leave you here to rot. But we wouldn’t stop you if you were to . . . try anything.”

Please no not Peter anyone but Peter he can’t he won’t please please please-

Peter looked at him with wide eyes. He didn’t say anything as his mouth hung open.

Ross turned to leave. “I’ll leave you to think about what I’ve told you.”

Please not Peter anyone but Peter-

He started to walk towards the elevator with a smug grin on his face, but Peter spoke up at the last second.

“You know, I used to be afraid of dying.”

Tony had a feeling his entire foundations were about to collapse.

Ross turned to look at him. “Oh, really?”

Peter nodded. “Leaving everyone, not being able to be with them. The life I would be leaving behind.” He paused for a moment or two. “But not anymore.”

Ross just kept grinning. “And what changed?”

Peter was quiet before whispering his answer.

“Everything.”

Ross nodded before turning to the guard. “Teach him a lesson about looking me in the eye.” Then he left without even looking at the rest of the Avengers.

Peter’s eyes grew wide as the guard turned to him, smirking.

Please, the kid mouthed as he looked at the floor.

But the guard just kept grinning as Peter started writhing around on the floor, *screaming* in agony. The sounds were like jagged knives, and they were sounds that never should have existed in the first place. These were the sounds of nightmares.

Tony couldn't take any more of this. His body gave out on him.

What was that one book called? The one that was about the destruction of innocence? Or was it just named after that part?

To Kill a Mockingbird?

Only, this mockingbird was more of a songbird.

They had *slaughtered* this songbird. *His* songbird.

He came to sometime after the lights went out.

All he could register for a moment was how unforgivingly *cold* it was. The ice seemed to cut into his veins, sting his face, and seep through skin without hesitation.

He couldn't remember what had happened. He just remembered darkness. He hadn't even dreamed - not about Afghanistan, not about the wormhole, and not-

He sat up, gasping.

Peter was here, he was alive, and he- he had . . . Ross had told them . . .

"Where is he?" he shouted frantically, getting out of bed. "Where's Peter?"

Please don't be dead please don't be dead pleasepleaseplease-

"Ugh," Clint groaned. "Did you *have* to wake us up? He's *fine*, Stark."

"He's okay?" Tony asked, temporary relief flooding through him.

"He just fell asleep, actually," Steve said from the darkness. "You just missed him."

"You say that like I could've talked to him," Tony grumbled.

Peter was alive.

Peter was going to die.

He was going to do it himself.

He couldn't let that happen. The thought alone made Tony want to die a thousand times over.

He drew in a shaky breath. "God, how did I f*ck up *this much*?"

"This isn't your fault, Tony," Rhodey said. "You couldn't have known he was here."

"Yeah, but I should've," Tony insisted. "He-he tried to . . ."

“Tony,” Rhodey insisted. “It was *not your fault*.”

Tony knew he was wrong. But he also knew that they didn’t have a lot of time.

(“*It won’t take long for them to find you. But it will be too late by the time they do.*”)

Tony shook his head with resolve. *We’re getting out of here*, he thought. *Tonight*.

Chapter End Notes

There you go. Sorry for the wait.

Sorry for what I’m doing to Peter and his IronDad. I love pain.

I think this is the longest yet! Enjoy!

Be sure to leave your thoughts below! Love you guys!

Talking To The Moon

Chapter Summary

At night when the stars light up my room

I sit by myself

Talking to the moon

Tryin' to get to you

In hopes you're on the other side

Talking to me too

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“I’ll need those pictures back.”

"I'm gonna need the suit back."

"Please don't take this away. It's all I *have*—"

"I'm nothing without this suit!"

“You’re *nothing*. You never *were* anything. So you don’t *get* anything.”

"If you're nothing without this suit, then you shouldn't have it."

He wasn't really worth anything anymore. Had he ever been worth anything, though?

He missed Natasha, with her tough love. The way she would smirk at him during training, or throw an apple at him with a one liner about staying healthy. Her and Scott, Team Bug. That had always been a fun pairing he got to be a part of on missions.

He saw her eyes within the pile, and he cried harder.

Sam was a great guy. He always knew what to say. And Bucky was always great, too. A mysterious guy because of his past, but fun all the same.

Peter knew now, though. He understood. He knew why Bucky would sometimes get a far off look in his eyes, why he seemed to have trouble sleeping. Why he would look at his teammates with such love and gratitude when they were all together.

He understood what it was like to be alone somewhere with no hope of anyone ever finding you.

Peter had always loved Steve. His (usually) mature attitude was needed in a team that basically consisted of children in spandex, and his compassion for the whole team never wavered. He would always look at Peter with protectiveness, and he didn't really mind. This guy had seen wars unlike anything he could imagine.

War would be better than this.

He missed Wanda. Her Sokovian accent had always been so rhythmically interesting. She was the one he could go to with all his problems about not feeling accepted. She always understood. They would do tricks, too, combining his flexibility with her magic. So that was nice.

Clint was also fun. They would play video games together, and the others would joke about how immature they were. They would respond by throwing food and pillows, which never missed.

He couldn't remember what fun was anymore. His idea of a decent time now was simply not being awake.

Bruce was always around for his science questions. They would work together in the lab sometimes, comparing DNA samples and laughing at their mistakes.

Laughter felt like a dream. A distant dream that he could only remember if he tried hard enough.

Rhodey had become something like an uncle to him. He would help him with anything he asked. He didn't really realize how much he loved him (how much he loved *any* of them) until it was too late.

Too late had passed a lifetime ago.

He saw a flash of a face in the pile, and he *broke*.

Why? he asked Tony. *Why did I have to go? I never wanted to leave you. Any of you. So why? Why did it have to be this way?*

No one answered him.

He found himself talking to people in his head a lot. Sometimes he could almost hear them answer.

He wondered if *they* ever talked to him. Maybe Tony would look up to the sky Peter couldn't see and tell him about his day. Maybe he visited the gravestone he wished he was under, crushing the grass that had grown there.

(He doubted it.)

He missed the grass. He missed the sky. He missed the moon, the stars. He missed the sun; the warm rays that would touch his skin as he smiled up at the endless blue. He wished for even a glimpse of nature, of something other than unforgiving metal walls. A bit of warmth in his cold

cell.

There was a light on the elevator at night. It was so small and so dim, and didn't light up anything, but it was a light. If he crossed his eyes it became two.

He could pretend he was outside for a moment, looking up at the stars. That he wasn't deep underwater. That he wasn't filled with only pain and numbness at every hour of the day.

Pain and numbness. They were all he knew. Sometimes the emptiness threatened to consume him, to drag him down into the endless nothingness for all eternity.

But then the pain would hit, and he would be overcome by such *loneliness*, such *agony*, and all of it would flare up in his chest and he could only think about wanting to either leave or die and *I just can't do this anymore please just let it all stop pleasepleaseplease-*

And the numbness would always come back.

He wasn't sure which was worse.

He had been feeling more empty lately. A shell of what he once was. Like he was occupying empty space - a hollowness that nothing could fill, rather than a pain that no one could heal.

But as he clutched the pieces of his photographs to his chest, he felt something deep inside of him *snap*.

"*Why?*" he yelled. He just couldn't *take* this anymore. He wanted it all to *stop*. To be *over*. "What do you *want* from me?"

He wasn't prepared for Ross' answer.

He told Peter . . . that he could *go through with it*.

He said they didn't need him alive anymore. Not that they would kill him, but that he didn't care if he "tried anything".

He wasn't as naive as he once was, so he knew exactly what Ross was talking about, no matter how much he wished he didn't.

And quite frankly, his words left Peter frozen in shock.

All this time, hoping and praying for death, and the opportunity was just *dropped* in his lap. His brain was having trouble processing the information.

Ross left, but not before telling the guard to electrocute him. It was over relatively quickly, despite the intense pain he knew he would never get used to no matter how many times he experienced it.

But he hardly even heard his own screams anymore.

He was left with nothing but a pile of ripped up photos and his thoughts.

(The ripped up photos. The loved ones he would never see again, in real life or on paper. A reminder of what he had lost - not that he had to be reminded. He lived it every waking moment.)

(His thoughts, which left him drowning in a dark, dark place. The thoughts of his dreams of his own cries; the concept of a palace dungeon no light could ever reach.)

He hated both of them.

Peter wasn't sure what to think.

On one hand, he didn't want to do this anymore. God, he *really* didn't. He wanted to be dead.

I want to die. Just let me die.

He didn't care if he went to heaven or hell, or just stopped existing. He didn't *want* to exist anymore. Heaven was just a bonus. Hell would be a blessing.

He could do it. He had already tried, and it still haunted his nightmares. But he wouldn't have nightmares anymore if he went through with it.

But on the other hand, he knew that if anyone found out, they would be *crushed*. He was long gone mentally, but he could just suck it up so that whoever eventually dug up the Raft from the bottom of the ocean floor wouldn't have to know too much.

"How long do you think it took for them to get over your death?"

They all already knew he was dead. They had gotten over it, sure, but there was chance Ross would tell them that *he* was the one to do it, and not the fire they had thought.

(The fire he wished he had died in.)

He knew it was a microscopic chance. Ross would *never* tell them. But he couldn't stop thinking about what would happen if he *did* . . .

He didn't want to do that to them. He couldn't.

If Tony found out

He didn't want to think about it.

(Even though he knew Tony probably was better off without him. He hadn't exactly been an easy burden after his aunt had died.)

(But he missed him.)

(Oh, how he missed him.)

(He missed him more than anyone. He missed him so much that he could almost hear his heart breaking in the sickening silence every night brought. He just wanted one more hug, one more hair-ruffle, one more movie night. *Anything*.)

(He would settle for just seeing him again, even in a picture.)

The lights went out, and Peter somehow felt even more alone.

He wouldn't be singing tonight, even if that was probably the only thing that had been keeping him sane.

"Please," he called into the darkness. "If I shouldn't do this . . . Just give me a sign."

There was no answer.

"*Anything.*"

No answer.

But maybe they *were* answering, and he just couldn't hear it. Maybe he wasn't listening hard enough. Maybe Tony was sitting on his balcony, talking to him across the night sky. Maybe May was up in that same sky, twinkling like a star.

Maybe they could be talking to him, trying to get him to stop; hoping for an answer he couldn't give.

But he didn't hear anything, and that was enough.

At least they thought he was dead. At least they would be right soon.

"I'm sorry," he told the tiny light above the elevator before lying down.

There was no answer.

Chapter End Notes

SO originally I wasn't going to post this until I was done with the next few but then I was like "I'm seeing infinity war in 3 hours ef it"

So here you go

I hope I didn't stomp hearts too much but honestly idc.

Peter is too good for this but yOLO

AND SHOUTOUT TO lil_ace_dragon FOR THIS IDEA AND SONG

You guys can totally do suggestions for songs. I have general ideas but I love feedback.

Be sure to leave your thought below if you liked it! Thanks for reading!

See You Again

Chapter Summary

It's been a long day
Without you, my friend
And I'll tell you all about it
When I see you again
We've come a long way
From where we began
Oh I'll tell you all about it
When I see you again
When I see you again

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Tony?”

“Yeah, Clint?”

“Could you please answer a question for me?”

“Uh huh.”

“Why, ever might I ask, are you *f*cking trying to rip your f*cking tooth out?*”

“I’d tell you that, but I really don’t want to.” He paused. “How can you even *see* me? It’s pitch black.”

“It’s obvious,” he said.

”He’s not wrong,” Natasha added like he had been commenting on the weather.

Spies. “You know what?” Tony said. “Not even going to ask.”

“Tony,” Cap said, exasperated. “Why are you . . . *What?*”

“Hush,” he said. “I have to get the right angle here.”

“Tony, *what* are you doing?” Rhodey asked with the same tone Steve had been using.

“You know, just trying to save our *sses,” he said as he tied a string from his blanket around his right molar, so it sounded more like “‘us ryi’ ‘o ‘ave ah a’e.”

(Man, he rambled *way* too much when he was scared.)

“Tony, so help me,” Natasha said, “I will *break* you when we get out of here unless you tell us what’s going on right now.”

“Unfortunately, I can’t do that,” he said as he tied the other end of the string to the stool. “Not unless you want me to leave you here.”

“Tony,” Rhodey said. “Please explain.”

“Hmmm,” he said. “Nah.”

He stood up on the bed with the stool, braced himself, and dropped it on the ground.

“*Gah!*” he yelled as the tooth popped out. He pressed the white sheet to his gums, which caused the fabric to quickly turn red with blood. “*Lordy*, that hurt!”

“Could someone tell him to shut up?” Wanda said with a tired voice. “I want to sleep.”

“Please,” Bucky added.

“You know what? I’m leaving without you losers.”

“Tony, would you please explain to us what that has to do with your tooth?” Steve asked.

“He’s gone insane,” Scott said dramatically. “Absolutely insane. Ross broke him. We’re done for. God help us.”

Tony rolled his eyes before picking the tooth up off of the ground. It was possibly their ticket to freedom.

If I did this right, Tony thought. The last time he had tried this . . . hadn’t ended well.

He wiped the blood off of the fake tooth and felt around for the small button.

Bingo.

“If this doesn’t work,” Tony said, “make sure to tell Ross to f*ck off.”

“Tony,” Rhodey said. “What are you *doing?*”

Hoping this doesn’t blow up, he thought as he fingered the button.

But he couldn’t tell them that in front of the guards, even if they were as bright as a pile of bolts, much less the security cameras.

“Just trust me on this,” he said instead.

“Right,” Bucky said. “Cause that’s always worked out.”

“Why did I forgive you, again?”

“Beats me,” he grumbled.

Tony held his breath. *It’s now or never.*

He pressed the button.

"Yes!" Tony shouted in triumph as the Iron Man suit began to close over his fingertips. Within seconds he was fully enclosed by the familiar armor, the glow of the blue center cutting through the darkness. But he had his night vision on, so everything was green.

"Son of a b*tch," Steve said as he jumped out of his cot.

"Watch your language," Tony said as he blasted the glass door to pieces, the sound echoing around the whole room. He quickly shot down the two guards by the elevator along with the cameras.

"Tony," Clint deadpanned. "How the *ever loving f*ck*-"

"Nanotechnology," he said as he stepped into the center of the room. "This is nothing - you should see the stuff they have in Wakanda. I mean, that one girl-"

"Tony." Steve sounded even more exasperated than before.

"Sorry, getting off topic. I'm assuming you guys want to get out of here?"

"Tony, why didn't you do this *before*?" Rhodey demanded.

"Other than the fact that I was a little preoccupied, and the fact that we needed to be alone?" he said as he started destroying the cell doors. "Let's just say the last time I tried this didn't end as well as now. Took me over an hour to put out all the lab fire."

He put a metal hand on Cap's now-free shoulder, who was smiling like an idiot.

"Tony, you really know how to make an entrance, don't you?"

"More like I know how to make an *exit*," he said as he turned to Nat's cell. "You're not going to slap me if I let you out, right?"

"Not unless you do it right now," she said with a smirk. "And that was *so* cheesy."

"Yeah, yeah."

He destroyed the glass and turned back to the others. In less than two minutes, everyone's collars were destroyed and littering the ground.

"Alright," he said as he went towards the elevator, "we've got about five minutes before they storm this place, at best, unless the fight is moved somewhere else. So you guys go on ahead. I'll catch up."

Thankfully, they seemed to understand.

"Alright, Tony," Steve said as the rest of them followed him towards the elevator. "Just don't take too long, okay?"

"No prob, Cap," Tony said as he started to override the system. "Oh, and kill Ross if you see him. I never want to see that ugly face again from anywhere but a casket."

"Will do," he said, stepping into the elevator. "And Tony?" he added, voice suddenly serious.

Tony turned to look at him. "Yeah?"

"Take care of him."

Tony nodded with resolve, looking around to see protectiveness flaring in everyone's eyes. "I will."

"And you are *sure* you don't want us here?" Wanda asked carefully.

Tony glanced behind him. ". . . yeah. I'm sure. I'll meet you at the chopper."

Steve nodded, the doors closed, and Tony was almost alone.

Almost.

He turned around slowly, the only sound other than the suit being two sets of breathing. Friday wasn't in this suit due to lack of programming (this *was* just a prototype), so Tony was on his own as he started towards the cell. But the kid's breaths were the only thing that really registered in his mind.

He didn't want to wake him up because of an explosion, so he started to hack the security on the lock itself.

It was open in seconds.

"Sentry Mode," he muttered as he stepped out of the suit. It was dark, save for the light blue glow of the now-empty armor.

But it was enough to see his kid.

His heart pounded in his chest as he entered the cell. He was *so close* to him; he could reach out and run his fingers through his brown curls; he could actually *hold* him, d*mmit; he could hold him the way had been dying to for the past six months.

But he didn't. His brain seemed to be short circuiting as he stepped closer, stopping him and kneeling him down automatically when he got to the edge of the bed.

He seemed to be able to only look at him for what seemed like an eternity.

And god, he was so *small*.

Even in sleep, he seemed to be in pain. Tony remembered what Ross had told them about the "experiments" - how his kid had been *screaming* for him - and felt his heart ache with protectiveness and guilt.

He hesitated for a moment, breath catching in his throat, before laying a tentative hand on his arm.

I'm here now, kid.

Peter immediately tensed, and Tony's heart broke.

Peter was absolutely *terrified* when he suddenly awoke to a hand on his arm.

He had been woken up like this a few times before. Those days were always the worst. He *dreaded* those days.

The days when they would experiment on him for hours and hours and hours and *hours*. When they would test his “durability” by beating him repeatedly and without mercy, and no matter how much he cried or pleaded or screamed, they would just keep going. Over and over and over.

And if he fought back . . . it didn't end well.

They would always start by yanking him out of bed and punching him until he turned black and blue. Then they would drag him into the elevator before

He couldn't think about it without his stomach turning to ice.

(The things they did made electrocution and solitary seem like a reward.)

But he was about to experience it *again*.

Today is another one of those days.

It was almost worse than being cut open like a rat; he just had to take it - he couldn't rely on the bonds to keep him at bay. He had to just *let* them beat him senseless. It would've been humiliating if he cared enough.

But . . . hadn't Ross said they were done with the experiments?

Had he been lying? Was he still going to be forced to live through this torture?

Maybe they were just hurting him for amusement now.

(Not that they hadn't been before.)

But he couldn't think about that. They were about to pull him out of his cell again, they were about to make him beg them to end his life, they were about to *oh please no stop pleasepleaseplease-*

When they woke him like this, he wasn't allowed to move, to talk, to *scream*; he was nothing to them, so he had to act like nothing.

Even though they were going to make him wish they were simply tearing him apart some other way and they just kept going and he couldn't do anything about it because he's just so weak and he wants it all to stop please let it stop-

But the hand on his arm was . . . gentle. He had forgotten what gentleness was. He almost didn't recognize the notion.

The calloused palm was almost familiar, in a way. And it wasn't one of the guards, he realized - their hands were always gloved, like he was too vile to touch.

Why haven't they pulled me out of bed yet?

Did he dare open his eyes and look?

No. He didn't. He *couldn't*.

But then he heard the person - man - say something he hadn't heard in a long time. It was a mere whisper, but it held so much emotion, so much pain; so much *hope*.

His name.

“Peter?”

...

He knew that voice.

He hadn't forgotten it. How could he? That voice had been haunting him every single night on the Raft like a ghost without a face. No matter how much he cried - how much he *begged* - the voice remained just that: a voice.

And he couldn't get it to go away, either, so he was simply stuck in the middle of two horrors, which was somehow even *more* horrible.

And he suddenly recognized the hands, too. The familiar rough texture from years in the workshop; the warmth and safety that radiated from them. The *gentleness*. The same hands he had longed to hold him again during those long days in solitary.

But that was *impossible*.

He had to be wrong. There was no possible way it could be real.

He had to have been creating false hope for himself; or worse, he was *hallucinating*.

He had known it would happen eventually, but it was just a sign that he had finally lost it.

(He supposed his sanity had been ripped up with the pictures - and his soul.)

(And when would be a better time to go insane than right before he ended it all?)

But the hand on his arm felt so *solid* - so *real*; it couldn't be a figment of his imagination, it just *couldn't*.

It had to be a guard; it had to be someone that *wasn't* the person he was thinking of.

"Peter?" the voice spoke again, just as gently as before. "Please . . . look at me, okay?"

He couldn't take it anymore.

He opened his eyes.

Hallucination or not, the Tony in front of him was a thousand times better than a picture.

Tony couldn't help but smile when Peter opened his eyes. They were as big and brown and beautiful as he remembered; he could look at the Milky Way for hours and still feel less love than he did when he looked into these young eyes.

“Hey, kiddo,” he said softly, his voice cracking a bit.

The kid was quiet for a moment before saying something in a voice so soft it melted and froze his heart all at the same time.

"Tony?"

"Yeah, it's me," he said as his smile grew despite the shakiness it held. "I hope you're not too disappointed."

Peter was silent for a moment before lifting a shaky hand to Tony's chest. He rested it right over his heart, and Tony knew he could feel it beating rapidly against his fingertips.

"Are you real?" he whispered, voice quivering. His eyes were filled with tears.

Tony was finding it hard to keep his own tears at bay. "I promise you," he choked out, "I'm real. I *promise*."

Tony suddenly wrapped his arms around him tightly and pulled him off of the cheap mattress, being unable to just sit there while his kid was right in front of him anymore.

Peter buried his face in his chest, and Tony ran his fingers through his soft hair.

Just like they used to before Ross took him.

But it was tainted by the pain - by the way they held each other almost desperately.

Despite this, love bloomed in Tony's chest as he held his kid as tight as he possibly could, almost like he would fade away if he didn't keep him in his arms.

The boy started to shake with sobs; whether they were from relief or pain, Tony didn't know. But he was crying, too.

He decided that he would never let him get hurt again.

(He had already made that choice when the kid got thrown across a parking lot by a giant man on steroids, but he really made the decision consciously this time.)

But he realized that the damage was already done as Peter's tears soaked through his shirt.

"It's okay," Tony said into his hair. "I'm here. You're safe."

"But you're not real, are you?" Peter said.

The kid sounded so *scared*. Like he didn't want to believe that he could be fake. Or maybe he didn't want to believe he was *real*.

Maybe it was both.

The kid had asked him earlier if he was real. Tony had thought it was the shock. But he realized that it was because Peter had simply lost hope; he wasn't capable of believing in something good anymore. He had been broken for too long to be fixed by just a few hugs.

Another tear slipped down Tony's cheek. "Feel my heartbeat, Peter," he said, holding Peter's head against his chest. "It's real. I promise. It's real. *I'm* real."

"Then tell me," Peter said quietly.

Tony hugged him tighter. "Tell you what?"

"How you knew," he whispered. "How you knew I was alive."

Tony held back a sob of his own as he thought of what Ross had told them - what he had *shown* them. "That's not important right now--"

"I knew it," Peter said, crying harder. "I've gone *crazy*. God, why didn't they just k-kill me in that fire?"

"*Peter*," Tony said as the walls suddenly threatened to close in on him. "*Please don't say that-*"

"None of this would've happened." Peter tried to pull away, but Tony just held tighter. His voice just kept getting louder. "I could've been with May and Ben, and maybe even my p-parents, but instead I'm stuck in this d*mn *jail* talking to *myself*!"

Tony ignored the pang in his chest at the mention of his family. "Peter, I *swear* I'm real--"

"Then why now?" Peter yelled hysterically. "Where have you been? If you were real you would've been here by now--"

"Ross took us," Tony pleaded. "He took us and he locked us up. The others are here, and they know you're alive. We aren't leaving you here - I promise."

Peter was silent.

Tony took that as a good sign. "If I wasn't real, would I be wearing this hideous blue uniform?"

"Just--" Peter tried to pull away again. "I *can't* - I - just leave me *alone-*"

Tony didn't let up his hold. "Peter, I'm *real*. I promise you--"

And that's when the kid started to scream.

The screams Tony had never wanted to hear again were pounding against his ears as Peter started thrashing around in his arms, and it became clear that he was being *electrocuted*.

Tony cursed as he reluctantly let go of him. The kid didn't even notice as he continued to cry out in pain and throw his head back against the floor with a painfully loud *thud*.

He made a split second decision and ran to his suit.

Once he was in it, he ignored the way his stomach rolled at the writhing kid on the ground and went to hold him down.

He reached forward and tore the collar off of his neck with a satisfying *snap*. The kid immediately went slack, but Tony was too focused on where the collar had been to notice. It was so inflamed, so damaged; so *raw*.

How many times . . .

"Still think this is fake, kid?" Tony asked with a shaky voice as he stepped out of the suit. He hoped the pain had done at least one useful thing and made him know he wasn't just seeing things.

Peter looked up at him. "I - I -"

Tony was already burying Peter in a hug again. He would never get tired of the warm feeling that spread throughout his body when the kid leaned into his touch. He had missed it almost as much as the kid.

"I'm going to get you out of here," he told him. "I won't let them hurt you."

They stayed like that for what felt like an eternity, but would never have been long enough. Tony just hugged Peter, who hugged him *back*.

(He had been hugging Tony before, but there was something different about it.)

(Something good.)

The kid's cries had calmed down, and it felt like forever before one of them spoke.

"You - you're real?" Peter asked with a small voice.

Tony just ran his fingers through his hair for what must've been the hundredth time. Man, it had gotten long. And it was curlier than he remembered. But it was still the softest thing he had ever touched.

"Yeah, buddy. I'm real. Just feel my heartbeat, okay?"

"And . . ." he said, "this isn't another dream?"

Another.

Tony felt like *he* was being electrocuted. "No, kiddo. You're awake."

I have to be dreaming, Peter thought. But I never want to wake up.

Tony was here, he was hugging Peter, and Peter was hugging him as tightly as he possibly could, super strength be d*mned. He didn't want to leave this again - to leave *him* again. *Never* again.

(He knew, somewhere in the back of his mind, that the others were there, too. But all he could focus on was the man whose arms were wrapped around him like a shield.)

There was one emotion he felt that was overpowering all the others.

(And it was amazing to actually be able to *feel* again. He had forgotten what emotions were like. What good emotions were like.)

It went past the emptiness, past the disbelief, past the pain, and even past the overpowering love he was experiencing.

Relief.

He might actually get out of this prison. He had a chance to be free. He had a chance to see

everyone he loved again.

He *was* seeing someone he loved again.

And so for the first time in an eternity, Peter Parker had *hope*.

It was a tiny ember compared to the fire that once raged within him, but it was *there*. He knew it was probably going to die as soon as this illusion of salvation was gone (even if it *was* real, he knew he was never leaving the Raft with his life - he knew that was as true as the Earth was round), but it was there for the moment. And that was good enough for him.

"*It's going to be okay*," Tony was saying. "*You're going to be okay*."

Peter started to actually believe him.

Chapter End Notes

FINALLY!!!!!! THEY ARE BACK TOGETHER!!!! AHHHHHH

I hope it was satisfying. It was satisfying to write this.

I also hope this made up for how short/bad the last chapter was.

So the escape plan was stupid.... whatever. I thought of this before iw, so that only helped back this up. I thought it was fun, though. But if you're going to tell me it was stupid in the comments, just know I already know that. The action and stuff isn't really the main focus of this fic. It's the emotions and relationships.

And Tony is way more emotional than he is in canon. Do I care or give a crap? No. Will I keep him like this complete all-out father? Yes. Do I want Tony to be more open in canon? Yes. Will he be open in this fic? Yes. Does he have The Dad Thing mostly figured out by this point cause he had custody of Peter for about a year? Yes. Do I give a crap? No. (*iw spoilers* Is that what I meant when I said I wanted a hug? No.)

And apparently I'm failing English??? Because I chose to write this and not my research paper??? Oops????

Great song suggestions last chapter! I might use a few. If I don't, please don't be offended! They were all great, but not all of them fit the storyline. Sorry!

I hoped you guys liked it and be sure to leave your thoughts below! Thanks for reading!

Set Me Free

Chapter Summary

I'm so tired of hurting
But it's all I can do
So I'm asking you
To set me free

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

After what seemed like an eternity but still would never be enough to make up for lost time, Tony said something other than endless reassurances. “We have to go now, okay?” he whispered.

Peter nodded against his chest, sniveling a bit. “I-I’m coming too, right?”

Tony wanted to rip his heart out of his chest. That would be less painful than this - than listening to this once-optimistic boy sound so utterly broken.

“I’m not leaving without you.”

Peter held on tighter. “Sorry,” he mumbled into the base of his neck.

This kid. He always apologized for the smallest and stupidest things - getting an A- on a test, beating people at Monopoly, buying candy - and Tony had always loved him even more for it.

But now all he could think about was when he had said the same thing to the guard for a *nightmare*. “You have nothing to apologize for, okay?”

“Sor- I mean, uh, okay.” His voice was too innocent for words. It was too bad he wasn’t so innocent anymore.

Tony began to shift so that he could haul them both up, but Peter started to hold him almost desperately.

“Don’t leave me,” he almost pleaded.

Tony couldn’t help the tear that trickled down his cheek. “I won’t, kid.” And he meant it. He was never letting go of his kid again.

He pulled them both up as steadily as he could. “Can you walk?”

Peter nodded jerkily in response. “Y-yeah. I think so.”

Tony loosened his hold a bit, but he kept them latched at the hip as he walked them out of the cell. He took one look at the suit before nodding his head slightly. It began to follow them to the elevator.

No way was he going to get Peter out of this terrible place in a piece of metal.

The walk to the elevator was slow, taken one step at a time. He knew this had to be big for the kid. He had been stuck here for *months*. And was *finally* getting out.

He looked over at Peter, whose eyes were wide and teary.

“You okay, kid?” he asked softly.

Peter wiped his eyes as Tony went to override the elevator system again. “I . . . I can’t believe this is *real*.”

Tony chuckled a bit. “I know.”

He shook his head. “No. I mean - I *can’t*. I really can’t. I’m probably going to wake up soon, aren’t I?”

He sounded so sad. So *sure*. It really hit Tony at that moment how much he had really changed. He wasn’t the optimistic kid he had once known. That kid was gone.

It took all of his willpower not to let tears fall again.

Tony was also torn between hitting himself, Peter, and Ross in the head with varying degrees of force.

“Nope. You’re stuck with me,” he said through the lump in his throat. “I’m as real as you are.”

“You keep saying that,” Peter said as they stepped into the elevator. “I wish you’d stop.”

“Well, too bad,” Tony said as he tightened his hold a bit. He had his arm wrapped around Peter’s lower back while the kid simply gripped the back of his shirt tight enough to tear.

(Tony tried to ignore how thin he was. That was a problem they could tackle another day.)

The suit followed them inside and stood between them and the doors like a shield. They closed and the two (three?) of them began to move upwards.

They both were silent for a moment, clinging to each other at the side like they were the other’s life source, before the kid moved.

He brought a tentative hand up to meet the one on his side. “If you are real,” Peter began shakily, staring at their hands. “If you’re really here . . .”

Tony could hear the unspoken “*like I hope you are*” lingering behind his words, but he stayed quiet as he stared at Peter’s tiny form.

“I want you to know that . . .” The kid couldn’t finish. He just burst into tears again, turning to bury his face in Tony’s chest.

He wrapped his arms around him and ran his fingers through his hair again. “It’s okay. You’re okay.”

Peter shook his head again. When he spoke, he sounded, as some might describe, vulnerable. But all Tony could hear was the hope that laced his words. “Am I really . . . I’m really going home?”

Tony wanted nothing more at that moment than to bundle this kid up in blankets and keep him at

the tower for the rest of his life - once they got there. And they would get there, and Tony would never let him out of his sight again.

“Yeah, kiddo,” he whispered. “I’m taking you home.”

Peter just cried harder, muttering “thank you” and “oh my god” over and over and over again.

Tony had tears in his eyes again, and no matter how much he willed against it, they trailed down his face and landed in Peter’s hair.

Man, this was one slow elevator.

“Peter,” Tony said slowly. “The doors are going to open any second, okay? I need you to . . .”

Man, he didn’t want to do this. He wanted to keep Peter in his arms; he wanted to shield him from harm himself. But he couldn’t risk it.

He shook his head a bit. He needed to do this *now*. “I need you to get in the suit, okay?”

Peter immediately tensed. “Please don’t make me,” he mumbled into his chest.

“I don’t want anything to happen to you,” Tony insisted. “You’ll be safe in there.”

“But what about you?” Peter asked, voice shaking.

“I honestly could not care *less* about me,” Tony said, ignoring how touched he was by Peter’s concern. “Listen . . . I can’t lose you again, okay?”

He didn’t think there was anything worse than the idea of Peter not being protected enough and getting hurt - or *worse* - but then the kid responded.

“And I can’t lose *you* again,” he choked out.

Tony’s heart collapsed in on itself.

Sure, Tony had lost Peter. But Peter . . . had lost *everything*. He lost his father-figure, he lost his team, he lost his friends; he lost his family, biological and honorary.

He lost his home. He lost his freedom.

Everything.

And Tony was going to make sure he got it all back, and then some.

“I know you’re scared for me,” Tony said. “But if you don’t make it-”

“*I can’t go in a machine!*” Peter suddenly screamed. “Don’t make me go back in there!”

Realization hit Tony like a ton of bricks.

“Peter-“

“*I can’t - please* don’t make me - *I swear* I won’t talk back anymore-“

“Peter, *please*-“

But he was already trying to get away as he continued to beg - *literally beg* - Tony not to put him in

a machine.

The doors opened.

The sound of gunfire immediately assaulted their ears. Tony quickly spun around so that his body was shielding Peter's.

Thankfully the noise seemed to pull him back to the present.

"W-what's going on?" he asked loudly, but Tony could hardly hear him.

"I'm not sure!" Tony yelled back.

He glanced behind him. The guards were all fighting the blue-clad prisoners trying to make their way to the helicopter on the launch pad, but they were no match for the Avengers. The team dodged every punch, kick, and bullet like it was second nature (even though it kind of was).

He turned back to the boy in front of him, who had started to shake. His breaths had grown quick and shallow.

"Breathe," Tony said quickly. "In and out. In and out. You need to breathe, okay?"

(Tony was getting sick of the word 'okay'.)

Peter just shook his head rapidly, and his breaths only became shorter.

"Breathe with me," Tony instructed calmly. He *had* to stay calm - despite the panic starting to grow in his chest like a parasite. For Peter. "Just follow my breathing. In and out."

He hefted Peter out of the elevator and behind a pile of crates. The Iron Man suit went off to help the others in the fight, so Peter wouldn't be getting in it anytime soon. But Tony continued to hold him as he tried to calm him down.

It took a few moments, but Peter's breaths started to slow. He was still trembling in Tony's arms, but he was able to breathe again.

"S-sorry," he gasped.

"Don't apologize," Tony said.

The gunfire was still going on behind them, but it sounded like there were fewer shooters than before. The team must've been winning.

"Listen to me, okay?" Tony said, pulling them apart a bit so that he could look into Peter's eyes (even though the kid kept looking down anyway). He waited until Peter gave him a shaky nod to continue. "The team's going to be ready for us any minute. When I tell you to, you *run*. Run to the helicopter and don't look back. Do you understand?"

Peter glanced up at his face before burying himself in his chest again. Tony was worried the kid would protest, but he was relieved when he felt him give a shaky nod.

"I'll try not let go of your hand, but if I do, *do not look back*," he said seriously. He knew about the kid's tendencies to not follow orders, but he wanted to make sure Peter knew he wasn't kidding around.

"But--"

“Peter, you can’t stop running. Even for a moment. Do you understand?”

The kid was silent.

Tony sighed. “I *will* put you in that suit if you don’t–“

“Fine,” he said immediately. “I won’t look back, okay?”

"And?"

"And I won't stop running."

“Yep. Right on, kiddo.”

He just hoped the kid would actually do it.

They sat there for a few moments, trying not to listen to the gunfire that pelted their ears. Tony used the time they had to run his fingers through Peter’s hair again, just to remind himself that he was *actually there*. He was *alive*.

That still hadn’t really sunk in yet. This kid was *alive*. He had been alive the whole time. It was completely amazing and completely horrible all at the same time.

It was amazing because Tony could hold him again. He could have more time with this miracle of a child that didn’t seem to hate him like the rest of the world did. He got his little spider back, and that was the best thing that could ever happen to him.

It was amazing because the kid wasn’t dead. He was going to be able to live his life. He was going to have the bright future that Tony had believed to be stolen by a fire six months ago.

It was horrible because of everything else.

“I’m going to look around the corner,” Tony said. “Stay up against the crate, okay?”

The kid nodded, but still held onto him with impossible strength.

Tony sighed. “That means you have to let go.”

“Then no.”

Another sigh, but it held more pain than before. “I’ll be right back.”

“I don’t care.”

“Peter, I need to see when we need to go.”

“Then let me come with you.”

The image of Peter getting shot suddenly filled Tony’s mind. “No way, kid. Not until it’s safe.”

“Then you shouldn’t go either.”

“Peter, let go of me,” Tony said with a bit more force. He needed to check, and Peter couldn’t be put in any more danger.

But his gut wrenched when the kid immediately let go of him and shrank back against the crates. “Yes, sir,” he said in a monotone voice.

Tony's eyes widened when he realized what he had done.

Why? Why does my kid have to go through this?

"Peter," he choked out. "I'm sorry--"

"Just go check," Peter said, seemingly back in the moment again, but his voice was thick with tears.

"Peter--"

"Please."

He didn't want to leave him, especially after what had just happened. But the need to escape made him move anyway.

He peered around the corner. The fight was going well. The team had almost made it through all the guards, whose unconscious bodies littered the ground. They were almost to the helicopter in the center of the room - only a handful of guards between them and their goal.

He turned back around. "We're going to have to go really soon so . . ."

He trailed off as he got a good look at the kid. His face was buried in his hands, and he was shaking with sobs. All of the fight still left in Tony drained out of him.

"Hey," Tony whispered as he closed the distance between the two faster than what should've been possible. He tried to touch him, but Peter jerked away.

"I - I'm sorry," he choked out. "You're still taking me, right?"

"Don't," Tony said, too emotionally exhausted to deal with those words. "I'm not leaving you. *Ever*. I'm the one who should be sorry."

"S not your fault," Peter mumbled after a moment, looking up a bit.

Tony went to hug him again, and this time the kid let him. Before Tony could get close enough to wrap his arms around the kid, he noticed something.

There was no more gunfire.

"Peter," he whispered. "Get ready to run, okay? I'll be right behind you."

Peter looked up at him with misty eyes. "Promise?"

Tony couldn't help but smile at his childlike words - an echo of what he had been saying to him. "Only if you promise not to trip and fall."

The real message was clear: *don't do anything that will make you not make it to the team.*

Tony didn't miss the flash of happiness in Peter's eyes, however brief it was. "I promise."

Tony ruffled his hair and helped him stand up, leaning him against the crate. "When I tell you to, you *run*."

Peter looked like he wanted to protest, but he nodded jerkily instead.

Tony turned went over to the edge to look again. Surely enough, the team had finally gotten access to the helicopter after getting through the guards.

"Run," Tony said, turning to Peter. "You need to run *now*."

His eyes were full of fear, and it broke the older man's heart. "But what about-"

"I'm right behind you," he insisted. He pulled Peter over to him and pushed him towards the team. "*Go*."

And the kid took off with Tony right behind him. They ran as fast as they could.

They were almost there when more guards started pouring out from the other doors. Which was just their luck. But thankfully, by some *miracle* from heaven, they managed to get in the helicopter before the shooting started.

They only started firing just before the door closed tightly, causing the bullets to ricochet off of the tough metal exterior not a millisecond later. It was unlikely anything made it into the helicopter at all.

They took off through the open roof and into the stormy sky. Tony breathed a deep sigh of relief.

We're going to be okay.

It was a small space, and the team all being scrunched together wasn't exactly . . . comfortable. Tony somehow got separated from Peter in all of the chaos.

"You're on my foot--"

"Hey, get off--"

"Where's a shrinking suit when you need it--"

"If you don't move your arm in five seconds--"

"Move over you dumb fu--"

"HEY!" Steve shouted over everyone. They all quieted down, but kept pushing and shoving.

"Everyone's here, right? No one's injured?"

"We're all good, Cap," Tony said with a huff. "Now where's my kid?"

For that short moment no one answered, Tony almost had a heart attack.

"T-Tony?" a quiet voice said from somewhere close to him.

Tony breathed a deep sigh of relief. Peter was okay. They had escaped, and Peter was going to be okay.

"If everybody would please move," the billionaire said, "that would be great."

"I think . . ." Peter started to whisper as Tony continued to squeeze through the others. He hardly realized that the only reason he could hear him was because the others had gone dead silent.

He pushed through the last few of them and saw an image he didn't fully understand. Peter was slumped against the wall, holding his midsection in a self-hug. His face was as white as a sheet.

“Peter?” Tony asked gently, putting a hand on his shoulder.

“I-“ Peter began to say as he started to reach for him, but he was cut off by his own gasp of pain.

The hands reaching for him were stained a deep crimson.

“I - I think they got me,” Peter managed as he collapsed into Tony’s arms.

No. No. *No*.

“*F*ck*,” Tony hissed. Panic and dread started seeping into his chest. “You’re going to be alright.” His voice was reaching hysteria. “*I promise you’ll be alright.*”

"Tony, bad news," Steve yelled from the cockpit. "This helicopter isn't equipped with first aid, much less the equipment we need!"

No. Nonono. This couldn't be happening. It couldn't be - Peter was supposed to be *safe*-

"Then do something *else*!" he cried before bringing his focus back to the child in his arms.

Peter looked up at him. His eyes were clouded with pain and fear and sorrow. Tears were leaking out of the corners.

They were still the most beautiful and innocent things in the universe.

“I'm sorry,” he whispered before those same big, beautiful eyes fluttered shut.

And he turned to dead weight in Tony’s arms.

Before Peter, Tony never thought he would have kids. Never even entertained the idea. He didn't want to end up like his own father. That thought alone terrified him.

But he still liked the thought of a child to call his own.

So he built things instead. Robots, Jarvis, Friday. Whatever.

He ended up outliving Jarvis. He had always thought the A.I. would be there forever - that was how it usually worked with machines, after all. But of course it was just his luck he would lose him like everything else in his life.

He never wanted to go through the pain of losing something - *someone* - that should've outlived him ever again.

He had already gone through it once with this kid. This kid who had a bright, bright future. This kid that he *loved*.

This kid.

His kid.

His all.

It had nearly killed him before.

He didn't want to go through it again.

Chapter End Notes

:)

I won't be able to update for a while. I'm technically grounded, so enjoy this. I'll update as soon as I can. Sorry:(

Chasing Cars

Chapter Summary

If I lay here

If I just lay here

Would you lie with me

And just forget the world

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

He was floating.

He was floating high above the atmosphere. Above the trees, above the clouds. He wasn't in any pain, which he found weird, even though he wasn't sure *why* he thought that was weird. He couldn't feel his body. Did he even have a body?

Was this what it was like to be at peace? He wasn't sure. But he liked it. He vaguely remembered being at peace a long time ago.

Even though it wasn't really all that long ago.

How did he know that? He didn't really remember much of anything. He didn't know where he was. What was his name, again?

He felt lightheaded. Like a balloon was expanding in his chest and skull, threatening to take him higher and higher into the never-ending expanse of his subconsciousness.

He sure did like this peacefulness. It seemed new. He wasn't sure why, though. Why wouldn't he feel like this all the time?

He sometimes heard people talking. Or he thought it was talking, at least. It sounded as if they were miles away from him. Hundreds, maybe thousands of miles.

"You've got to hold on, kid."

Was he a kid? He wasn't sure. He didn't feel like a kid. Something told him kids usually didn't know pain like he did.

"Don't let go. Promise me."

It was the same voice as before. He wasn't sure who it was. What was he not supposed to let go of? He wasn't holding anything. Or maybe he was and he just couldn't feel it.

*"Promise me right now, d*mmmit, or you're-" The voice broke. "Or you're grounded."*

He would love to be grounded. To feel like he was touching some sort of ground.

"Come on, Peter."

Was that his name? He wasn't sure. The man could've been talking to anyone. He was far away, after all.

But on an unrelated note, he wondered if you can feel people touching you if you can't feel your own body.

"What do you mean, 'no trace of sedatives'?"

"Exactly that. But he's extremely malnourished, which is probably why he's as weak as he is."

This was a new voice. Female.

There were other voices, too. Lots of them, in fact. They all said the same things. But he heard the man the most.

"Great. Just great."

He was glad something was going well.

"Peter, I'm so sorry."

He sounded so upset. Peter - he had figured out by this point that that was, in fact, his name - wished that he could comfort him. He wasn't sure why, but he felt a connection with him.

"I would give anything to trade places with you."

Did this man know where Peter was? He hoped he did. It wasn't so bad, though. It was peaceful.

"Just . . . Just wake up. Please."

He wished he could.

When Peter did wake up, he wished that he hadn't.

Pain flared *everywhere*. His chest was on fire, his head was going explode, his muscles were being boiled, his skull was crumbling-

He sucked in a shaky breath, trying to control himself. He knew he couldn't make any noise. That never ended well. His ability to stay quiet while in pain saved him a lot of suffering.

Where am I?

That was a redundant question. He was exactly where he always was.

But something told him that something had changed. He didn't know what, though.

The last thing he remembered . . .

Ross had come to talk to him. Told him he could do it. He had a long debate with himself. He decided to go through with it the next morning. Then . . .

If Peter could have bolted upright without giving himself severe whiplash or vertigo, he would've.

Tony had been there. He had *actually been there*. He had gotten Peter out before . . .

He suddenly understood why his whole body ached.

But . . .

Something akin to doubt was starting to form and twist in Peter's gut.

Did I actually escape?

The longer he thought about it, the more likely it seemed that he had simply imagined the whole ordeal. The memory of Tony's arms around him was fading fast, like a cloud he was chasing across the sky. He tried to hold onto it like a lifeline; he tried to hold onto that warm feeling in his chest after spending so much time in the cold. But soon all he could focus on was the emptiness that suffocated him with every breath he took.

As if it had all been a dream.

What he had originally thought to be relief had been . . . happiness. He didn't recognize it, and he had been too naive to see that he *couldn't* be relieved if he didn't truly believe he wasn't simply seeing what he wanted to see.

There was no light filtering through his eyelids.

Was he still on the Raft?

Maybe?

Probably . . .

Definitely.

He thought for a moment that he had gone berserk and that they had thrown him in solitary, but he quickly thought better of it. He had trained himself not to move too much during dreams. It saved him from a lot of pain.

And besides, he was laying on a mattress. Solitary was nothing but cold, hard metal for days on end (back pain was even worse than the old people had said).

It felt softer than usual for some reason, but he wasn't going to complain.

The only way to know for sure where he was was to open his eyes.

His eyelids each felt like they weighed as much as a semi truck, but he managed to crack them open slowly. The sight that greeted him . . . didn't. It was completely dark.

His heart fell through the floor.

So that was it then. He was still on the Raft.

He had been talking to himself. When Tony promised him that he was real - promised that Peter was *safe* - he was just lying to himself. Could one be betrayed by their own subconscious?

It was still the middle of the night. The same time Tony had supposedly gotten him off the Raft.

But now he was all alone.

Alone. Alone. *Alone.*

He thought he had gotten used to the feeling.

Alone.

But that fleeting moment of something akin to contact had somehow wiped his memory board, and now every beat of his heart pumped the emptiness to every inch of his body like blood.

Alone.

He wanted to feel something good again. He wanted that so, *so* much. More than words could express. Almost as much as he wanted it to go home, and almost as much as he wanted to die.

Alone.

He hated these terrible emotions that clawed their way up from the depths and through his gut and chest and throat to suffocate and choke and torture and kill and - and-

I'm never escaping this hell.

Tears started to form in his eyes, and he didn't even try to stop them from falling down either side of his face. They landed in his ears, which vaguely reminded him of the time he went to the beach as a child. He just wouldn't stop crying because of the water in his ears. He would give anything for those problems again.

A gunshot wound wouldn't be too bad either, compared to this. But the pain in his chest was almost normal; a simple side effect from his wonderful times with the guards. Maybe they had beaten him in his sleep again.

But they were gone now, and Peter was alone in the dark.

It felt normal. He hated that. And it felt normal to hate - a fact he hated even more.

It just wasn't - it wasn't *fair*. It wasn't fair that he had to live the rest of his life in isolation. It wasn't fair that he had already accepted his fate.

Stop complaining, Peter, he would've told himself told himself during his early days of captivity. *You're better than this. You're being pathetic.*

But now he just didn't care. It didn't even matter anymore. He didn't have any dignity left to protect - not while he was treated less than dirt. So why would he care how pathetic he looked? No one was watching that cared enough to judge him.

A bright, piecing light suddenly filled his vision.

It caused pain to shoot through his already pounding head. He snapped his eyes shut and tried not to throw up.

He heard people talking, but it sounded distant over the ringing in his ears. Everything was blurred, it was just odd edges in his head and distant senses.

Everything suddenly *snapped* back into focus. Alarms were going off; people were talking *so loud*; they were touching him - he could feel every groove of their skin - and they were going to cut into him and hurt him and-

“*Breathe*, Peter,” someone was saying. “You’re okay.”

No, he wasn’t okay. He *wasn’t*. He couldn’t be okay, he could *never* be okay-

“I’ve got you,” they said again. They were rather insistent. “You’re safe. You’re not there anymore.”

But he *was* there - he would *always* be there, and he was never going to escape, to be *safe*-

“Come on, kid. Breathe with me - in and out. In . . . out.”

He somehow managed to get his lungs to cooperate again after a few moments of struggling. But he was still scared out of his mind - these people were going to cut him open and beat him and make him bleed-

“Stay calm, okay? Open your eyes, Peter. It’s me. I’ve got you.”

He tried to peel his eyes open again, but the light seemed to cut into his corneas like a hot knife through butter. He closed them again tightly.

“Someone get the lights!” he yelled, and the sound was like another knife straight through his skull.

They must have sensed his agony, because he said more, only quieter: “I need earmuffs - yeah, the ones that filter everything but me - it’s a sensory overload, I think-”

The lights stopped filtering through his eyelids, and something slipped over his ears, making everything go completely silent. His whole body relaxed, slumping against the bed. He realized that, despite the pain still in his chest, he was *exhausted*.

“Can you look at me?” the man asked.

And without the background noise, it was so painfully *obvious* who the voice belonged to.

But it *couldn’t be*.

It wasn’t possible. He had been dreaming; no one had rescued him, he was still stuck on the Raft, he was never escaping. He was as good as dead.

“Come on, kid. I promise you’re going to be okay.”

What do I have to lose?

He cracked his eyes open a little, saw it was dark enough to not hurt him, yet still light enough to see, and then opened them a bit more.

He looked over to see Tony sitting on the edge of the bed, and realized he was running his fingers through his hair. Peter involuntarily leaned into the touch, and it felt so solid, and comforting, and *real*-

That means-

It can't be-

But it is-

"I - I'm *free*?"

Tony smiled. "Yeah, kiddo. You're free. Free as a bird."

I'm free. I'm actually free. I'm not trapped. I'm not confined. I'm free.

I'm free.

Peter smiled, too. And it felt amazing. He hadn't smiled in so long, it hurt his facial muscles. But he didn't care.

This was better than pictures; better than Spider-Man; better than the Avengers; better than *anything*. He was *free*.

"I had a pet bird, once," he countered, voice wet with unshed tears. He hadn't made a joke in so long. His mouth usually got him a fist to the jaw on the Raft, but he didn't even think about that. He was just so *happy* - he was just so *free*.

And Tony was right beside him. He had two things he had wanted most on the Raft. And he wouldn't trade either of them for the universe.

"Okay, *Mr. Outlier*." Tony ruffled his hair. "You're as free as I am."

He must have sent the others out, because they were alone now. He didn't even notice them leave.

"Does this mean I have to do what Pepper says all the time?" Tears were slipping down his face.

"I'm about to have Dr. Cho to knock you out."

Peter smiled a bit longer, actually *laughing* a bit, but pain suddenly shot through his stomach and turned his giggle into a groan.

He remembered his gunshot wound, and the mood took a dive.

"You okay?" Tony asked quietly. "You're already under a lot of pain medicine, but I could-

"No," Peter said, trying to not sound pained. "I-I'm good. I'm sorry."

Tony took the hand that wasn't in Peter's hair and ran it over his face. "I told you, you don't have to-"

"But I *do*," he insisted. "It's my fault. I broke my promise."

Tony looked at him with sad eyes. "If you looked back, I'm not upset-"

"I did look back," Peter confirmed. "But I also didn't . . . I kind of . . . let them . . . shoot me?"

. . .

Tony stared at him for what seemed like an eternity. "You . . . *What?*"

(Why did I tell him that?)

(I'm an idiot.)

"I'm sorry," Peter whispered.

"My ears must be clogged, because I could've sworn you just said you *let* them shoot you."

"I, uh, kind of did?"

Tony's face started to grow sharp, which was never a good sign with him. "Peter, you *let them shoot you? Why the f*ck would you do that?*"

"They were aiming at you, so I didn't exactly *let* them . . ." Peter trailed off, voice wet. Tears were starting to leak out of his eyes again.

Tony's eyes grew wide before he buried his face in his hands. "Tell me you didn't. *Please* tell me you didn't."

"I did," he said with a small voice. "I'm sorry."

Tony looked up at him. He looked *mad*. Like, *ferry-incident* mad. "Peter, you could've *died*. I *thought* you were *dead*!"

"So? And I already-"

"Woah. Back up the f*cking truck. You don't almost *die* and then say '*So?*'! That's not okay! I almost lost you again!" He ended his rant with wave of his arms.

Peter really wished what happened next could be erased and forgotten forever.

He flinched.

It was a small movement - barely detectable, especially in the dark lighting.

On the Raft, Peter wasn't supposed to flinch. It ended in anything but comfort. But sometimes he just couldn't help it.

Peter knew Tony had seen it based on the way he instantly froze. It was too dark to see his expression, since he had also leaned back a bit.

After several moments of nothing, Tony finally spoke again. His voice was much softer, and a lot more pained. "Peter . . ."

"I'm sorry," he said again. "I really am."

"No, Peter - listen, I . . . I'm the one who - sh*t kid, don't cry-"

Peter hadn't noticed the tears on his cheeks until Tony mentioned them. "Sorry," he mumbled as he wiped at them shakily.

"Kid, just stop it with the sorries, alright?"

"I just couldn't-" Peter choked back a sob. "I wanted to protect you."

A bit of fight seemed to return to the billionaire at that. "I can do that fine on my own-"

"You would've been dead." It wasn't a question. It wasn't up for debate. "You don't have my healing."

"It doesn't matter," Tony said. "You *were* dead, kid. For *seven minutes*."

Peter ignored the way his heart skipped a beat at the idea of being dead. "I'm sorry."

"Kid-" Tony went to put his hand on his arm, but Peter's reflexes made him quickly draw said arm towards his chest.

(Why do I have to mess everything up?)

Tony's eyes were as wide as saucers as he put his hands up in surrender. There was something impossibly sad about his expression. "Hands off. I promise."

Peter hated close to tears his own voice sounded. "It's not . . ."

"It's not me?" Tony said. Peter nodded. "I get it."

"I guess I just . . ." Peter took a shaky breath. "I'm messed up, you know?"

Tony looked about ready to cry. "Kid, you are *not* messed up."

He shook his head. "But I am."

"You're not anymore messed up than I am. Crap, wait - that was a bad example--"

"You're not as messed as me," Peter mumbled.

"Wanna bet?" Tony said, flashing his signature fake grin. "I took a nuke up into space once - *years* ago - and I still get nightmares. Does that make me messed up?"

Peter shrugged, mumbling a "no" out of the corner of his mouth.

"And you dealing with abuse for months and not being comfortable with touch isn't messed up either." His stare was intense, and as much as Peter wanted to look away, he couldn't. It held his gaze there like the guards' vice grip. "We're all messed up, in some way. So none of us are, if you think about it. We just have to get through it together. Got it?"

He gave a shaky nod, and Tony looked away.

He didn't want to be afraid of people touching him. But he just couldn't *help* it. The hands that came for him always seemed to want to hurt him. He could only see the hands that would manhandle him to oblivion, which was the gentlest touch he had felt in what seemed to be eons. Reflexes for punches and kicks seemed to be ingrained into his muscle memory.

He didn't want to react the same way to gentleness.

He put his own hand on Tony's, who looked back at him with wide eyes.

"I don't think I'm completely against touching," he mumbled. "Just don't be mad. Please."

Tony looked defeated. "Fine, kid. I'll let it go."

Peter sighed in relief. "Thank y-"

"*For now.*"

Peter gulped. "Sorry."

"Can it with the sorries."

Tony started to shift, and Peter gripped his hand tight enough to bruise. "Please don't leave."

Tony's expression went soft once again. He felt him run his fingers through his hair.

"I'm never going to leave you, okay?" Tony said. "You're stuck with me."

Peter smiled shakily. "Promise?"

"I promise."

Even though it hurt, Peter raised a shaky arm. Tony understood, and soon he was in his arms again, burying his face in his neck.

(The headphones had been discarded for a while now.)

"I'm sorry I scared you," Tony said.

"It's fine," he mumbled back.

"I'm also sorry I wasn't here when you woke up," Tony whispered. "I had to be somewhere."

He heard the unspoken words, too: *I'm sorry I wasn't there for you for everything.*

"It's okay," Peter said. "Can you stay?"

"I'm not going anywhere."

Tony laid him back against the pillow before shuffling under the covers with him. Peter curled into his side, resting his head next to his white T-shirt. It smelled like coffee and aftershave and motor oil. It smelled like everything good in the world. Everything he had been missing on the Raft.

Tony ran his fingers through his hair again, and Peter felt more lighthearted than he had in a lifetime.

"I missed this," Peter said, looking up at him. It hurt his neck, but he didn't care.

Tony smiled and put his arm around him, almost like he was forming a small protective barrier. But there was something sad about that smile. "I missed this, too."

Peter yawned sleepily. "You're much better company than Junior," he said as he buried his face back into Tony's side.

"Who's that?" he heard him ask.

"Oh, you know," Peter said, cut off by another yawn. "The mean old guard."

He heard Tony chuckle a bit. "That was his name?"

"No, I just called him that," he said. "You know, out of . . . hmm . . . spite."

"It's a great fit," Tony said.

"Yeah."

It was nice to fall asleep with an almost-dry face.

The world could've been burning, or about to be struck by a meteor, or in the process of being attacked by aliens, and Tony wouldn't have moved.

The kid was snuggled up to his side, and looking at his peaceful face, Tony could almost pretend that this could last. That the jokes he made earlier weren't just a product of temporary happiness.

That the calmness and smiles weren't a result of the drugs being pumped through his system.

That they could forget what had happened.

But they wouldn't be able to forget. Peter would never forget his time on the Raft, no matter how much Tony wished he could.

He wished he could forget what Peter had told him.

The kid took a bullet for him.

Not only had Peter completely disregarded what Tony had told him, but he had also inadvertently decided that his life was worth less than Tony's. A fact that wasn't true in the slightest. Peter was worth at least ten of him, and he had almost thrown it all away to protect someone that didn't deserve it.

He also knew that it meant his self preservation levels had gotten even *lower* (and they were hardly there to begin with).

He probably shouldn't have gotten so mad. But whenever Peter put his life in danger, Tony could only see red. The idea of this kid losing his life because of something that could've been avoided killed him.

(Even though the kid flinching killed him a thousand times over.)

Sometimes he just wanted to tie a bell around the kid's neck.

But that thought made him look at Peter's still-raw neck in guilt. It was obvious that they had electrocuted him - a lot. He didn't want to know how many times.

Tony wanted to tear Ross limb from limb for doing this to his kid. For making him suffer. For breaking him and leaving the team to help pick up the pieces.

But Ross had gotten away. That sly son of a b*tch had slipped through their fingers.

At least the Raft had been blown to kingdom come.

There was no way they were telling Peter any of that, though. He wouldn't have sleepless nights

because of any fear that had to do with Ross coming back and hunting him down.

Were they lying? Technically. Did he care? No. No one was getting Peter while he had a say in it, so there was no need to worry him.

Not while Peter was sleeping so peacefully next to Tony, with his little puffs of air making a wrinkle in his shirt move a tiny bit with every breath. Not while Peter had a vice grip on said shirt, and not with his legs curled up under the covers. And most certainly not while his hair looked so darn fluffy.

Not with the happiness swelling in Tony's chest.

Peter was alive, and he was going to be okay. Maybe not for a while, but they would get there.

Together.

Chapter End Notes

Here ya go! I'm ungrounded!

I realize this was WAY fluffier than it needed to be, but then I was all “screw it they’ve waited long enough for this sheet” and had Peter hyped on sleepy meds.
SLEEPY FLUFF FOR THE WIN

So, Peter WAS dead, for seven minutes. So I didn't lie in the comments last chapter.
(Yes he took a bullet for Tony hahaha PAIN)

I hope you like this, I enjoyed writing it.

Oh, and I got glasses. I now look like a huge nerd, but now I can see details on the tv. huh. And I didn't think Tom Holland could get any better looking.

Would y'all be interested in making this an adoption fic? I could do that if you guys want me to.

(And the number of times someone commented the word "aneurism" last chapter wasunexpected???? like seriously did you guys plan that or)

(and would you guys be interested in a fic where at the end of infinity war Peter ends up in OUR world?)

SHOUT OUT TO SHOYZZ FOR DOING AMAZING FANART FOR THIS STORY
SHE'S THE BEST

Wake Me Up When September Ends

Chapter Summary

As my memory rests

But never forgets what I lost

Wake me up when September ends

Summer has come and passed

The innocent can never last

Wake me up when September ends

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Tony wished Peter could've woken up as calmly as he had fallen asleep.

Tony must've drifted off at some point, because the next thing he knew, he was being jolted awake. The first thing that came to his mind was '*Peter's in danger*', but when he saw the gentle sunlight trickling through the curtains of the MedBay, he realized that everything was fine.

Peter was *safe*.

But then he was suddenly moved again, and he looked down to see his kid's face scrunched up in what seemed to be pain. He was muttering things under his breath, and they were concerning to say the least.

"Peter, you're okay," Tony whispered as he ran a hand through his hair - well, he *tried* to run a hand through his hair. But Peter had suddenly jerked away from him with a grunt.

"*Please no*," he mumbled under his breath, breaking Tony's heart. "*Please stop, please-*"

"Peter, you're safe. Listen to me-"

"*I'll listen, I'll listen, I swear on my life, just stop-*"

His was getting louder and louder, and more and more painful to listen to, with every word.

"Peter, you aren't on the Raft. You're at Avengers Tower. Just wake up-"

"*No, please no, I won't - not that, anything but that-*"

Peter's eyes suddenly snapped open and he jolted upwards before letting out a scream so terrible, so *bone-chilling*, that Tony knew he would be feeling cold for *months*.

But Peter's teeth clamped shut not a second later, and his hand flew to his mouth in an almost desperate manner, cutting it off.

Tony's heart broke when he realized how ingrained all of this was. He had done the exact same thing on the Raft.

"Peter, you're *safe*," he said quietly.

The kid's head whipped around as soon as the words left Tony's mouth. His eyes grew watery and his hand slowly fell from his mouth before he launched himself into his arms.

"Oh god, oh *god*," he kept repeating into his chest.

Tony just kept up the same comforting words he had used on the Raft. Telling him he was safe, that he was going to be okay.

And now he could say that he wasn't on the Raft - that he was home.

(The word felt amazing on Tony's lips. They were *home*.)

But every sound that came out of the kid's mouth killed Tony just a little bit more.

How had he missed it? How had he not realized that his death wasn't what it seemed to be? Why didn't he check the facts for himself? How had he been so blinded by grief that he didn't even think of another alternative? Why had he been so *stupid*? Why did he give up on his whole world?

The answers didn't matter, and they never would. All that mattered was that his kid had paid the price for it.

And he's still paying the price, Tony thought as another wretched sob tore through his kid's throat. He ignored the ice in his stomach as he untangled more of his curls.

Peter's cries eventually settled to a few silent tears that soaked through Tony's shirt every few seconds.

"S-sorry I woke you up," he mumbled.

Tony sighed. *If this kid apologizes one more time, I'm knocking him to World War V.*

"I was already awake," he lied.

"Sorry I scared you."

World War V, coming right up. "You didn't scare me. And if you say sorry one more time, I'm going to have a heart attack."

Peter didn't respond to that. He just stayed in Tony's arms as they both sat on the bed, Tony running his fingers through his hair.

(He soaked in how real this was. How real the boy in his arms felt - how his every breathe imprinted on him.)

(He was pretty sure Peter was doing the exact same thing.)

They stayed like that for what felt like hours, but was more likely mere moments, before the genius spoke up. "You're with me, right? You know where you are?"

Peter started to nod before shaking his head. "I just know that I'm not on the . . . I'm not *there*."

(The kid couldn't even say the name - not a good sign.)

Tony hummed in response. "That place is gone, okay? Blown to bits. You're *never* going back there."

This information just seemed to make Peter cry harder, making Tony's heart tighten with concern. Had he somehow gotten attached to the prison he had been held in for six months? "Hey - hey, none of that now-"

"No, it's not that," Peter mumbled. He looked up at Tony with a small smile on his lips - a smile that could light up a dying star. "I'm just relieved, you know?"

And Tony smiled enough to light up a thousand dying stars. "Happy to hear it."

"What about . . . you know . . . *him*?"

There was so much raw fear in his voice that it made Tony sick.

He wanted to track down Ross and pound him to World War *VII*. He was the reason for Peter's fear. For his *suffering*.

It was *his* fault that everything good had been ripped out from under both of their feet.

But Peter would never be able to sleep at night knowing Ross was still out there.

"He won't be bothering you anymore," Tony said. It wasn't a total lie - just not the whole truth. There was no way he was going to let Ross get to his kid, dead or alive.

But it seemed to be enough for Peter.

"Thank you," he whispered into his shirt.

Tony smiled again as he ran his fingers through his kid's hair. His other arm was wrapped tightly around his shoulders, holding him against his chest.

He could hold Peter like this for hours.

And he had missed it.

But his smile quickly melted as he remembered what had just happened - why Peter had woken up so suddenly. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Peter tensed. "About what?" he asked innocently.

"You know, when I have bad dreams, talking usually helps." Now *that* was a total lie. He never went to anyone to help with his dreams. Ever.

(He had thought about going to Peter for a little while, but then the kid was killed.)

(*Kidnapped*. He was *kidnapped*. Not dead. Just locked up and brutally tortured for six months.)

(Yeah. Nothing wrong with that.)

So maybe he didn't have experience with the whole 'talk out your feelings' thing. But he had heard enough TED Talks and read enough psychology books to know that talking was the best therapy for nightmares - maybe.

He honestly had no idea what he was doing. Which was not a good thing when he was looking after Peter's emotional stability.

But Peter just shook his head. "No. I - I'm fine. I'm fine."

Out of all the qualities he could have picked up from me, this had to be the one.

Tony didn't want to press him, so he changed the subject. "So, you wanna know where you are?"

Peter looked up at him with grateful eyes before they were overcome with wonder. "Where?"

(It was sad the kid didn't recognize the walls of the MedBay he had occupied so often during his year as an Avenger.)

(It was also sad that Peter had yet to make eye contact with him. Was he that afraid? Was he that affected by the Raft?)

"How does Avengers Tower sound?"

Peter's eyes grew even wider, if that was possible. It was actually really cute.

(And there it was - that deep parental feeling he got when he was around Peter. It came like it had never left. And he wouldn't have it any other way.)

"I'm really there? I - I mean - here?"

"Yep." Tony ruffled his hair. "You'll be back in your old room before you know it."

"R-really?"

Tony chuckled. "Well yeah. Why wouldn't you be?"

Peter shrugged nonchalantly. "I didn't realize I was allowed to leave."

Why would he - oh. *Oh*.

All of the happiness Tony had been feeling died instantly. Some part of him that hadn't already been broken shattered.

Peter took Tony's silence as something other than shock. "I mean, unless you want me to stay in my room, or here, then-"

"No," Tony deadpanned. "God, no. No. Just . . . no." He sighed deeply. "Peter, you're not a prisoner here. You can go wherever you want once you're healed. You could go to Madagascar for all I care."

The kid smiled a bit. "I don't know about Madagascar, but maybe somewhere like . . . I don't know, Disney?"

Tony's smile returned. "You wanna go to Disney? We'll go to Disney."

"I was totally kidding-"

"And I'm not."

"It's so *expensive*-"

"Billionaire, remember?"

"I don't know." Peter looked up at him with another meek smile. "I'll stick with New York for a while."

"That's fine, too," Tony said with a smile of his own. "And while you're here - totally *not* confined - I think there are some superheroes that want to see you."

Peter looked up at him again, eyes shining. "Really?"

"Who would you like to see first?" Tony said in response.

"Can't I see everyone?"

D*mn those puppy dog eyes. "Dr. Cho said not to overwhelm you, or whatever. I called bull, but then she threatened to keep you here for even longer. So I gave in."

The kid looked down. "I, uh . . . yeah. I guess."

Tony thought for a moment.

Ah, screw it.

Peter couldn't begin to describe the happiness he felt when the team walked in even if he tried. He hadn't seen any of them in what felt like a lifetime.

He might've seen them on the helicopter, but that was such a blur that he didn't even *try* to understand it.

How long had it been since he felt happy? Happy like *this*?

(Tony's arm around his shoulders, the team looking at him with smiles on their faces. Actually getting to see those very faces.)

It was all amazing.

It was so strange, though. It almost seemed fake.

(Even though Peter wasn't an idiot. It *was* fake. He knew that calming drugs were coursing through him through an IV line. Those drugs were the reason he didn't flinch at the creaking of the door or the way the team marched in like a group of guards.)

"Hey Queens," Steve said as he sat down beside the bed.

Peter smiled, and reached out to give him a hug. The super-soldier happily gave him one. "Hey Steve."

(The drugs were also probably the reason he didn't flinch away from Steve's touch.)

"How are you feeling?" Wanda asked, giving him an even bigger hug as soon as Steve let go of him.

The sound of her Sokovian accent was so comforting and familiar that it made Peter smile even more.

(He didn't care about drugs. He was going to take all the happiness he could get.)

He hugged her back and simply said, "Fine."

"He still is a mini you, isn't he, Stark?" Clint said with a small laugh.

Tony sighed from his spot on the bed next to Peter. He had moved so the team could see them both better. "Unfortunately, yes. Yes he is."

Peter kept smiling, the team kept laughing, and it was the best thing Peter had experienced in a long time.

The sound of them talking was a bit harsh on his ears, but it wasn't that surprising. Living with practically no sound for so long would do that to a superhuman. He didn't mind, though; the slight discomfort was a reminder that this was *real*. This wasn't a dream, and it wasn't some after-death vision.

The pain was real, so the laughter was real. The smiles were real. It was all real.

Peter had thought he would never smile again less than a few days ago. Speaking of . . .

"How long was I - you know, was I out?" he asked a bit unsteadily.

The conversation suddenly screeched to a halt. Smiles melted off of their faces. Peter immediately regretted his question.

(It was a wonder he even got it out in the first place. On the Raft, it was be spoken to, period. No talking at all unless asked a direct question.)

(No fighting back.)

(No looking anyone in the eye.)

"Well, kid," Tony said after it looked like no one was going to answer, "about two days."

That was news. "Really?"

"Yep." Tony ruffled his hair. "So don't ever pull that stunt again, alright?"

"Stunt?" Cap said at the same time Peter said in a small voice, "It wasn't that long."

Everyone turned to Peter. They seemed to want to say something, since their mouths kept opening and closing.

"What do you mean, 'wasn't that long'?" Natasha eventually asked.

Peter was sure his face was as bright as his suit. He wasn't used to this much attention, even before the Raft. "I mean . . . it was?"

"Kid, the longest time you've ever been unconscious for was less than a day," Tony said.

"What about the . . ." Peter started to say, but then he realized that they didn't know about that. Or the time before that. Or the time before that . . . The Raft sure kept him on his toes. "Never mind."

They looked like they wanted to press, but Steve decided to keep prying on the other subject.

"What did you mean, 'stunt'?"

Tony rolled his eyes, but Peter could see his worry behind the motion. Especially since his grip on his shoulders tightened ever so slightly. "This kid decided that he was done with common sense and jumped in front of a bullet. Isn't it so *obvious* how brilliant he is?"

Tony's voice might've been dripping with sarcasm, but the others didn't seem to care. They only cared that Peter had seemingly taken a bullet for no reason.

"Why would you do that, Peter?" Sam asked after a moment of silence. There was something in his voice that Peter didn't understand - it was like fear, but not because of the fact that he could've died.

It would've made sense if he had known what had happened on the Raft, but he didn't. So it didn't make any sense to Peter. So he told them the half-truth.

"It would've hit Tony if I hadn't," Peter mumbled.

And just like that, it seemed like an invisible weight was lifted off of the team. A weight that Peter didn't understand - he could only see the way it left in released breaths and loosened shoulders.

(There was no way they could've known.)

(Right?)

Tony opened his mouth, no doubt ready to scold Peter for his 'reckless behavior' and such, but something suddenly buzzed on everyone's wrist watches, and Tony's words seemed to die in his throat as he sighed.

"What is it?" Peter asked.

"Nothing too important," Steve said, standing up. "There's just some legalities we've had to clarify about the Raft."

If anyone noticed Peter flinch at the mention of the underwater prison, they didn't comment. "W-what kind of legalities?"

"Mostly just us suing the government and all that crap," Tony said. "Witnesses and whatnot."

"Just your run-of-the-mill Tuesday," Clint said as he stood up from his spot on the windowsill.

Peter's stomach flipped as the whole world screeched to a halt.

". . . It-it's *Tuesday*?"

"I just said that."

His heartbeat was thrumming against his eardrums. "What-what time is it?"

"About one in the afternoon?" he said, checking his watch. "Yeah. Ten til one."

He took each breath very deliberately. Peter didn't really know how to process that.

He knew what *time* it was. He knew the *day* of the *week*.

It was a strange feeling, for sure. But not . . . unwelcome. It was like he had a bit of control back; it

was like finding something he hadn't realized he had lost.

"You okay, kid?" Tony asked, concerned.

"Yeah," Peter said after a moment. "What . . . What day is it?"

"September twenty-first, right?" Clint said. "I think that's it."

"*What?*"

Panic started to bury itself in Peter's chest, setting itself deep.

The last time he had known the month, it had been March . . .

He had been gone for five - no, *six* months. He had been on the Raft for *six f*cking months*.

No, that couldn't have been. He couldn't have been a prisoner for six months. Even if it had felt like an eternity and a half, it hadn't *really* been that long. Ross couldn't have stolen that much of Peter's life away from him.

But he almost took your whole life, some small voice at the back of his head told him. *You're lucky they even helped you escape at all. You're lucky they got there when they did.*

But was that lucky? another voice said.

"Breathe, kid," he heard someone say. "Breathe with me."

Peter felt himself shake his head. "I - I can't-"

He couldn't breathe, he couldn't move, he couldn't do anything about it-

"Yes you can," they said. He realized it was Tony.

So long, so so long-

"Breathe. In and out."

But he was okay now . . .

"In . . . and out."

In and out.

"You're okay."

I'm . . . okay.

They panic slowly seeped out of him as he slowly gained control of his breathing again, and exhaustion took its place. He hadn't realized how tired he was.

"Sorry," he said quietly. His voice was wet. "I didn't realize . . . It's been a while, hasn't it?"

Tony looked at him with sad eyes. "Yeah. We missed you, kid."

Peter chuckled a bit to try and hide his tears. "I mean, at least you only had one person to miss, right?"

His lame attempt at a joke wasn't received as anything remotely funny. All of their expressions turned dark and sad, and maybe even a bit guilty. But he didn't see any pity - and he was grateful. That was not something he needed on a Tuesday.

"I'm, uh, kind of tired," he said.

They seemed grateful for the change of subject.

"Alright, well, we can get some sleep while you all deal with the American justice system," Tony said. "I envy you."

"Shut up, Tony," Clint said. "Anyone not dealing with the government has *my* envy."

"Can't argue with that," Scott said. "I've had enough trouble with them."

"You were a thief," Steve said.

"Details."

Peter smiled a bit. He had missed this - the team's friendly banter. He felt more at home than he had in a lifetime. Their arguing was so much better to listen to than the scientists' about what part to cut into next.

"Hey, kid," Tony said from his spot next to him. "You alright with them leaving?"

Peter hesitated. He didn't want them to leave. They had just got there. *Peter* had just got there.

But the more sensible part of him knew that if he were in the right state of mind, he would've been panicking with all of the people around him. It was too much like the experiments.

(People surrounding him, talking amongst themselves, almost making a sense in dread settle within his chest.)

"Y-Yeah," he said, leaning more into Tony's side.

The team didn't question it. They all said their farewells quietly as they left the room, and Peter waved a bit as they passed.

"You guys good?" Steve asked from the doorway.

"Yeah," Tony said. "We're good."

Steve smiled and shut the door, and they were alone.

"Sorry I freaked out," Peter said, burying his head in Tony's side.

"It's not your fault." Tony put his arm around him again. "You were gone for a long time."

Peter sighed. "I know what time it is."

Tony raised an eyebrow. "Okay?"

Peter laughed a bit. "It's a nice feeling."

It was Tony's turn to sigh. "Wait until you're my age. It won't be."

“Yeah. You’re old.”

“Watch it.”

“But I don’t need a watch now.”

“Nah. I’ll get you the best watch money can buy.”

“If you insist.” Peter was cut off by his own yawn.

Tony looked back down at him. “You’re on a lot of pain medicine. You should probably get to sleep, especially after . . .”

“Yeah.” Peter looked down. “I know. They just make me tired, I guess. Sorry.”

“Hey, they make me tired, too.”

Peter looked up at him. “You get panic attacks?”

Tony chuckled a bit. “Yeah, bud. I do.”

And Peter felt a little less alone.

Six months.

Six months on the Raft.

Six months of his life.

A piece of himself he would never get back.

April.

He missed the beginning of spring, when everything was new and bright and beautiful. The rain that would bring about life after months of cold gray and white.

Peter never got that new sense of life. He only got even more months of cold and gray. Locked away like an animal hibernating, only he had had no protection from the storm that raged around him.

May.

He missed the middle of spring. He missed the flowers, the fresh green grass.

He had missed the anniversary of her death.

How funny was it that his aunt would die during the month she was named after?

The thought only made the hole in his heart ache.

June.

He missed summer. He missed those days in the sun. He missed the clear skies.

He missed the heat - unless he counted the fact that he could've been writing letters to a furnace instead of a shredder. They never specified, so Peter's writings might've been eaten by orange flames.

July.

He missed the Fourth of July. He missed the fireworks, and the way they would light up the night sky in flashes of color.

The only color he got was a few tiny squares in the vast ocean of gray.

August.

He was sixteen now, but he missed his birthday. The day every teenager seemed to grow up a bit more. You were eligible to get a job, and your driver's license.

He never had a sweet sixteen. All he got were cold walls and a cold shower.

September.

He missed the beginning of autumn. When the leaves would change color. He missed the beginning of school.

The only thing he had learned these past few months was the true extent of pain.

Summer was over.

It was almost symbolic. The months that usually brought the most joy to people his age brought him the most suffering.

He had already missed most of September. He might as well sleep until October.

After all, almost everyone still thought he was dead.

Peter was about a fourth of the way awake when he heard voices.

"So he got away?"

"Yeah, he did. Wasn't even there to begin with. False alarm."

"I really want to kill him myself. Glad I didn't come, though. I'm perfectly happy right here."

"You didn't tell him, did you?"

“Nope. He doesn’t know. And it’s going to stay that way.”

A beat of silence.

“I still can’t believe he’s been alive this whole time.”

Another beat.

“I know. But I’m not complaining.”

“You seem pretty happy next to him.”

“Good *night*, Cap.”

Peter didn’t know who was talking or what they were talking about, nor did he care. He was too tired, and for once in his life, comfortable.

He leaned into Tony’s side a bit more, a drifted off into a hopefully dreamless sleep.

Chapter End Notes

Ok.

-I’m really sleep deprived but-

I’m really sorry for not updating. Here is an abridged version of why I didn’t:

My parents: you aren’t getting your phone until you finish your summer work

Me then: oh I’ll just do it quick so I can get my phone back :)

Me now to me then: haha u thought

Yeah, I’m sorry I won’t not procrastinate till the last second at everything I do..

But I finally updated!!!

So yay!

And um I don’t usually do this but I’m just in a big fic binging mood, so like here are some suggestions for Peter Parker Whump fics, I think they all are Peter Gets Kidnapped fics cause those are my favorite (And said fics need to be updated or I will lose my sanity):

- ”Helpless” by WordsAblaze
- ”How To Get People to do What You Want” by MetropolisCitizen
- ”Give him back to me, or so help me god” by eva7673
- ”Identity Theft” by KitCat992
- ”Goner” by CamelotQueen (okay this is finished now but it’s rly good go read it)

If you know of any good Peter Parker Whump/ Peter gets Kidnapped fics (preferably both) let me know cause I will EAT THEM UP (I really enjoy ones that include the Raft, cause they’re amazing honestly)

Or any good identity reveal fics? I’m thinking about starting a one-shot book on those

since I can't find any? I has ideas?

I have heard your opinion on the one where Peter comes to our world, and I think I'll do it! Just know it'll probably be more Crack than an actual fix it, like "who tf his Tom Holland" "why are there no superheroes" "no vibranium?!?!?" "No IRONMAN?!?!?" "What is fanfiction?" "What tf is a Batman" etc etc.

OH and apparently my mom found some of my fanfiction on my phone and instead of going "what are you doing with your life?!" She asked me if I had thought about a career in writing?? I'm shook??

Thank you so much for reading and comments make my day.. so please review:)

Dream

Chapter Summary

And all these sorrows I have seen
They lead me to believe
That everything's a mess
But I wanna dream

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Forgetting things can be easy.

It's easy to forget a pencil for school. It's easy to forget to call someone back. It's easy to forget where you put your phone.

It's easy to forget where you are. It's easy to forget that you're not in danger. It's easy to forget that you're safe.

Especially when you're asleep, and your subconscious takes you through your worst memories like a recap for a Netflix episode. *Recently on Your Life, you've been suffering for who knows how long Just in case you forgot.*

Yeah. That was probably the only thing he *wasn't* forgetting anytime soon.

So that was why he woke up screaming again, and that was why he collapsed into Tony's arms with tears rolling down his cheeks, shoulders shaking with each sob that tore through his throat.

(Every time he closed his eyes, it was like he *there* again. He was still in his own living nightmare, but now it simply followed him like a shadow.)

It was strange. On the Raft, he wasn't really that phased by dreams. They were a normal part of life that he had learned to deal with.

It was most likely because he had been living every moment in fear anyways, regardless of whether he was awake or asleep. But now that he was safe, he couldn't help the raw panic his dreams brought him.

Dreams that made him forget that he wasn't on the Raft. That his rescue had been real.

(He was surrounded by harsh metal walls, looking through a glass door at other cells that seemed to taunt him. They were almost symbolic for where there should have been people in his life.)

It's easy to forget that people care about you.

(Hands on his back, forcing him places he doesn't want to go. Hands covered in cold rubber gloves holding scalpels and drills.)

(Screams.)

But somehow, he could remember that part - that people *cared*. It probably had something to do with the way Tony held him against his chest and wrapped his arms around him in a way that simply said *you're not alone*.

"You're not there," Tony whispered softly into his hair. "Feel my heartbeat, okay?"

And Peter did feel it. It was steady, unlike his own. It was grounding.

Bum-bum. Bum-bum. Bum-bum.

It told him he wasn't alone. It told him that someone cared. That someone was *for* him.

And after such a long time of everyone being against him, it was one of the best realizations he had ever had.

Peter sighed against Tony's chest as his tears slowed, and he felt the man relax.

"You okay?" Tony asked quietly.

It was a ridiculous question. Of course he wasn't okay. He didn't know if he would ever be okay. He didn't remember how being okay felt - only that he missed it dearly. As much as he missed the sun.

But here, pressed against a scar from a time when his father-figure was hurt beyond words, he knew he was closer to okay than he had been in a long time.

"Yeah," he said. *I'll get there.*

He was released a few days later.

Thursday - it was a Thursday when he was released. It never ceased to amaze him that he knew the day of the week. He wasn't sure when he had lost track of the days on the Raft - he stopped counting days somewhere in the forties. Or maybe the fifties?

(It was ironic that he was taken on a Thursday, too. And he was pretty sure he woke up on the Raft on a Thursday.)

(Thursday wasn't a good day for him.)

Tony was there when he got out of bed for the first time. He had his hands out to catch him, if he were to have fallen.

But Peter rose on shaky legs without collapsing, despite the pain in his torso. He made it around the room a bit unsteadily, but by the time he got back to where Tony was waiting for him he could walk on his own without too much trouble.

(It was weird not having hands on his shoulders or a gun to his back, and it was especially weird to feel his arms swinging freely by his sides.)

But despite the fact that he could walk, Dr. Cho had given Tony specific instructions to keep him wheelchair bound. And since she had been so mad at him after he let the entire team see her patient at once, he had decided to listen to her.

(So Peter was back to not being able to go anywhere without ‘assistance’.)

“I’m sorry about this, Pete,” Tony said as he helped him into the wheelchair. “I know you’d probably like to walk yourself around.”

“It’s fine,” he said meekly as he leaned back into the chair. “I - uh - really.”

Tony sighed a bit before he began to push Peter out of the room. The ride was a bit bumpy, but Peter didn’t really mind.

The weird part was the hallway. It was lit by large windows that let the mid-afternoon sun trickle in gently onto the floor.

It was so different from the cold metal hallways of the Raft. Here, potted plants stood on wooden tables. If it hadn’t been for the pictures, Peter would’ve forgotten what the color green looked like. And he definitely would’ve forgotten what it looked like when sunlight bounced off the clouds.

But Tony had Peter in the shadowy side of the hallway, so he just looked longingly at the blue sky. And he was content with that, but Tony saw him looking at the windows.

“Do you want me to push you over there, bud?” Tony asked gently.

Peter was silent for a moment before looking up at him. “Could you?”

As an answer, Tony twisted the chair to the right and moved him so he was right in front of one of the windows.

New York looked just like he remembered. The silver buildings towered over everything below them, but the two of them were high enough that they were over the tops of most of them. He could see the blue sky and the white clouds, and he saw an airplane flying so high it was the size of a flea.

But the sun was so bright that he had to bring a hand up in front of his eyes. He smiled a bit - the sun felt amazing on his skin. He closed his eyes so he could put his hand down, and simply soaked in the warmth.

How many days had it been since he was certain that he would never see the sun again? How much time had passed since he had been drained of all forms of hope, since he had almost lost his chance at this?

Not enough.

He eventually looked up at Tony, who was smiling down at him.

“You ready?” he asked Peter, who simply nodded before looking at the sky one last time.

It was so much more vibrant than any picture could capture.

The elevator doors closed behind Tony and Peter, and they began to head up to his room. Tony didn't notice right away, but Peter's breaths started getting shorter and quicker the moment the doors closed.

When he did notice, he immediately kneeled down in front of him and put a hand on his shoulder. “Hey, you're okay. You're safe.”

Peter looked into his eyes for a brief moment before he flinched away from his gaze and squeezed his eyes shut.

Like a punch to the gut, Tony remembered Ross' words.

Teach him a lesson about looking me in the eye.

It killed him to see his kid like this. It was practically tearing him apart. The elevator was probably reminding him of the Raft - of the elevator that took him to be *literally* torn apart.

“I'm not going to hurt you, Peter,” Tony said. “We're just going up to your room. That's it.”

Peter didn't open his eyes, but Tony's voice seemed to calm him down ever so subtly. His muscles relaxed slightly and his breathing evened out a bit. His fists unclenched.

Tony kept talking. “You'll love your room. It's just like how you left it. You can take a shower in your own bathroom, even, as long as you get right back in your wheelchair afterwards. I asked Dr. Cho, so it's okay. Definitely don't want her mad again. She's almost as bad as Pepper.”

The elevator doors opened, and Tony got up and pushed Peter out as quickly as he could.

Peter's breathing evened out almost immediately. His clenched fists relaxed, and he opened his eyes to look at Tony gratefully.

“Thanks,” he mumbled with what was probably supposed to be a smile, but looked more like an exhausted grimace.

“You're welcome, Peter,” Tony said, smiling a bit. It probably looked the same.

Peter felt tears slip down his face as he looked at his old room.

Except it was just . . . his room. Not his old room - *his room*.

And it was just like he had left it, he realized with a pang in his chest. The same navy blue comforter. The same window overlooking the city. The same flat screen TV mounted between a few large bookcases.

So many memories were made in this room in the mere year he had lived in it.

(Memories that had taunted him on the Raft. Memories that had made him scream in frustration in the darkness of solitary. Memories that had made him want to drown in the freezing water of every

shower.)

But he was *back*. He was actually here. He was home.

Home was a place of safety. Home was a place where fear could be left at the door. Home was where he could be free.

And he was home.

God, he was *home*.

A sob tore its way through his throat as Tony pushed him further into the room. Tears kept coming down, but he didn't care.

This wasn't the Raft. This was *home*.

The thought only made more sobs cut through him.

"Hey," Tony said softly, coming around the chair and crouching down in front of Peter. "It's alright, okay?"

Peter leaned into Tony's touch as he wiped away the tears on his cheek. "I-I know." He summoned up a bit of courage and looked into Tony's eyes for a moment before looking down again with a slight smile. "It's just good to be back."

He saw Tony smile before he stood up again, though it probably didn't reach his eyes. Peter assumed it was the same case with him. "It's good to have you back, Pete."

Peter glanced around the room again, but his eyes landed on something, and his heart stopped. Time stopped. Everything stopped.

It was the *picture*.

Seeing it in his room - somewhere that was supposed to be as far from the Raft as possible - made ice crawl into his stomach and branch out to his whole body.

The breath he was taking hitched in his throat, and Tony must have heard it because of the way he immediately seemed to follow Peter's gaze.

"Ah, sh*t," he heard him mutter. "I'll take it down," he added quickly, before he was moving to do exactly that.

Peter just closed his eyes and counted to ten.

One . . . two . . . three . . .

The trick would normally work on the Raft when something he didn't want to comprehend happened.

. . . four . . . five . . . six . . .

Like a guard screaming at him, or electrocution, or even a particularly deep cut during the experiments.

. . . seven . . . eight . . .

He would count to ten, and it would be over.

. . . nine . . . ten.

He opened his eyes, and the picture was gone. Tony was back in front of him, his brows creased in worry from what he could see in his peripheral vision.

“So, how about that shower?” Tony asked with a mood-lightening tone.

Peter was grateful for the change in subject. He didn’t want to discuss *anything* about that picture with *anyone*.

Peter went for a smile, which Tony mirrored. “Sounds good.”

Tony ruffled his hair as he stood up, smirking. “I would hope so, squirt.”

Peter found himself smiling as he was pushed towards the bathroom.

Although the flicker of a memory on the Raft made him a bit apprehensive, causing the smile to fall away: it was the bathroom there that had caused him to break down in tears for the first time. Not the beds, not the emptiness, not the cruelty of the environment. It was all of that put together, yes, but the straw that had broken his weak back was the bathroom, and how different it was from the one he was about to enter.

While mold grew in the corners of the other one, the one he was now in was impeccably clean. The grimy curtain was so different from the navy blue one here. And the grays of the Raft were somehow just so much more dull.

Tony, who had left for a moment, returned with a fluffy towel and nice red and blue sweats. Quite different than the hospital scrubs he was still wearing.

Peter hadn’t realized it, but a glance at the window behind him showed him that the sun was getting low in the sky.

Time flies when you’re not being held against your will.

“If you need me, just yell,” Tony said. Then he added as an afterthought, “Your bandages are waterproof, so you should be fine.”

Peter looked up at him, and without even looking into his eyes he could see the worry dancing across his face. And, to be honest, Peter wasn’t doing much better.

He didn’t want to be alone again.

He really, really didn’t.

But he nodded anyway, looking down as Tony slid past him and out the door, shutting it with a soft *click*.

That was another thing he had forgotten: the fact that doors could be shut softly. Not slammed after him once he was shoved into another place he didn’t want to be.

He looked around the gray and blue room one more time before shakily wheeling himself over to the shower.

He remembered complaining to Tony about ‘not needing a bathtub’ when he first moved in, but at

that moment he was silently thankful. It was just one more difference between the Raft and his home.

He turned on the faucet and stuck his hand under to test the temperature. It was cold - freezing cold - yet Peter didn't even flinch before he pulled the toggle that would turn on the shower.

He started to undress before he was interrupted by a new voice from the ceiling.

The water can be warmer if you would like, Mr. Parker, the voice called.

Peter was not expecting it at all, so he almost tipped his chair completely backwards in surprise.

"Who - what -" he started to say, before remembering that Friday was, in fact, present in all the rooms.

The realization made his heart twist in longing - had he really forgotten the friendly AI so quickly? Had that really been on the long list of things that had been ripped from him on the Raft?

Wait - Friday had said the water could be warmer . . .

This time, realization hit him like a truck.

He had actually, truly thought that he didn't have access to hot water anymore, regardless of whether or not he was there. Even though he had still longed for something that didn't make him chilled to the point of pain, it was more of a dull sensation by the time he had been rescued.

"Rescued" . . . You could've been happy, a cruel voice at the back of his head taunted. *They ruined your chance.*

He ignored it, prompting to turn the water faucet further.

The warmth that met his fingertips . . . It almost ignited a blaze inside of him. He had forgotten what hot water felt like. It didn't bite him, didn't chill him to the core. No - it *warmed* him to the core.

A few more stray tears slipped down his cheeks before he finished getting in the shower.

Tony paced up and down Peter's bedroom, passing the bathroom door every few seconds.

He hated this.

He hated being away from his kid again, even if it was only for a few moments. It was like the Raft had never happened, and Tony was back to having a teenager to grieve.

He hadn't left Peter's side since he had woken up. And he had only left once when he was asleep, and that had turned out horribly. The kid had woken up in a panic and he had almost ripped his stitches out.

He couldn't afford being away from him.

He wanted to be able to see him, to reach out and make sure that he was okay. That he was alive and breathing and real.

At least Tony could hear him. He could hear the water running, and - if he listened hard enough -

he could also hear a faint humming.

His lips twitched upwards at the sound.

He hoped that the shower was helping Peter find some sense of normalcy again - even if he heard Friday remind the kid that he could have hot water if he wanted.

That one had stung.

So Peter had been dealing with cold temperatures *and* cold showers on the Raft. What other tortures had he been forced to endure?

The skin on his neck had yet to heal. Faint scars littered his torso, like they were from deep incisions.

(His conversation with Ross about the “experiments” was trying to make its way from the back of his mind, but he suppressed it with all he had.)

And Peter had been brought back from somewhere at the beginning. Tony had heard some of the previously rogue Avengers describe it as “Solitary” - a completely dark and silent metal room where you were kept, without food, for days on end. He couldn’t help but imagine Peter alone in the dark, and a lump formed in his throat.

And Tony had thought he had had enough reasons to hate Ross.

Rage - unchecked, animalistic *rage* - coursed through him when he thought of the ex-secretary. He had taken his kid, faked his death. He had locked him away from all things good in the world.

He had *tortured* him . . .

Peter Parker, the most innocent soul Tony knew, had experienced *torture*.

It wasn’t right. It wasn’t fair.

But it was still true.

The idea of a child as pure as Peter - as joyful and good as Peter - being subjected to pain for the sake of pain broke something deep inside of him. So did the way he shook after every nightmare, and the way he refused to look anyone in the eye.

He had looked Tony in the eye once before flinching so hard it must’ve given him whiplash.

Tony wished he could erase the time from the Raft. To make it so that Ross’ men had never taken him in the first place. But time was a fickle thing, and no matter how much any of them willed it, it wouldn’t change.

Tony must not have heard the water turn off at some point - his thoughts were all over the place, probably from sleep deprivation - so he was a bit startled when the door to the bathroom suddenly opened. He turned on his heel to see the kid roll out in his wheelchair, bumping slightly as he passed through the doorway.

Tony went right over to him, grateful that he could see those brown, and now wet, locks. Peter also seemed to breathe a sigh of relief when Tony put a hand on his shoulder and knelt in front of him.

“Feel better?” Tony asked with a small smile.

Peter smiled back with a sigh. “Yeah. I didn’t - I forgot how good hot showers were.”

Tony kept smiling, only it was a bit more forced. “Yeah, kid. Hot showers are pretty nice.”

Tony took the liberty of pushing Peter over to his bed, considering how late it was getting. He could’ve sworn he saw Peter yawn as he took the handles and called for Friday to turn out the lights.

“Up and at ‘em,” Tony grunted as he helped Peter out of the chair once they had gotten to the bed.

He gently placed his kid onto the soft mattress before pulling back the covers and standing to tuck him in. But he was only halfway up when Peter grabbed at his sleeve weakly, tugging at the fabric in an attempt to keep him from getting up.

He looked down to see Peter’s doe eyes staring back at him. For the first time in a long time - a far, *far* too long time - they held each other’s gaze without either of them flinching away.

“Don’t go,” his quiet voice rang out into the darkness.

The pure pain in Peter’s voice made Tony’s heart ache, but it was nothing compared to his eyes.

Tony had yet to get a good look at those big, brown eyes since they had left the Raft, but now that he had, he wished that he didn’t have to gaze into the soul of someone so broken - especially if that someone was once the brightest kid in New York.

He hated seeing him like this.

“I’m not going anywhere,” Tony whispered.

He let the kid drag him back down, the few seconds of eye contact over. He lied down next to Peter, who put his head on his shoulder and hugged him like a teddy bear.

Tony chuckled softly. His mind was slow-moving due to tiredness, so he didn’t even try to stop the waves of affection that coursed through him.

“I love you, kid,” he said without thinking.

Peter hummed. “Love you, too, Dad.”

Maybe it was the fact that both of them were so tired from the past week’s events, or maybe it was the fact that it was simply inevitable.

Tony would give credit to the first option in the morning, but at that moment, he simply smiled at the name.

That has a nice ring to it, he thought to himself before drifting off to sleep.

Chapter End Notes

ducks from rotten tomatoes I’m alive!

So... there’s nothing I can really say to apologize for not updating for like.. five months? I’m so sorry? I have no motivation to do anything at all?

Oh and the spacing turned out really weird and I can't figure out how to fix it? Sorry?

I hope you liked this chapter, more are coming, I swear! It might be a while, but they are c o m i n g.

I don't think I can emphasize how much your reviews mean to me. Like, if I refresh my inbox and I see that someone's commented on one of my fics? It literally makes my day and motivates me to keep writing.

HEY GUYS PLEASE READ THESE NEXT TWO PARTS

I cannot thank you guys enough for how big this story has gotten. I checked recently, and if you look at the "Raft Prison" tag, and check hits, it's at number three?!?!?! I can't believe?!?!?

I wouldn't be anywhere if it weren't for your amazing reviews and hits and kudos. I want to thank you guys so much for all of your love and support. Truly, with all my heart <3

So, would you guys be interested in shorter, more frequent chapters? I feel like if I had a smaller goal it would be easier to get them out to you guys, both timlier and just, easier on my fractured motivation. Please tell me your thoughts!

Thank you so so so much for reading!

(Oh and also, a small excerpt from my thoughts:

Me: *reading the many many reviews left on this story* hey, maybe I'm a good author! Maybe I actually have a future in writing! Wow, I can't believe so many people like this! I must be decent, at least!

Me: *actually reading my story* *bruce banner on the helicarrier* oh no, this is much worse)

Only Us

Chapter Summary

I don't need more reminders of all that's been broken
I don't need you to fix what I'd rather forget
Clear the slate and start over
Try to quiet the noises in your head

Chapter Notes

Disclaimer: while I am aware “Only Us” was written as a romantic song, the way I interpret the lyrics I have stated above are completely platonic. I in no way ship St*rker and if you do please leave and never come back. :)

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

“Well, aren’t you just an itsy bitsy spider?”

Peter freezes in his seat at the kitchen island, a slightly horrified expression crossing his features as his spoon drops back to his cereal bowl. “What did you just call me?”

Tony, who is still looking down at his Stark Pad, just smirks from the couch. “You heard me. Itsy. Bitsy. Spider.”

“I’m never talking to you again.”

“Sure you aren’t.”

Two days later, Tony Stark could be found literally begging a teenager to respond to him.

“Now, is our itsy bitsy spider ready to follow orders?”

A cold voice. A fear of pain.

“Yes I am.”

A whirring sound. Metal scraping against metal. Clinking trays.

Tears stinging his eyes.

Extreme, extreme pain in his back as something enters, but an even worse and jarring pain as it is harshly ripped out.

His scream barely gets past the blood-soaked cotton in his mouth.

“No, you idiot. We already took spinal fluid from that area. It’s not just some . . . I don’t know, itsy bitsy spider - we have to take samples from each vertebrae.”

More jarring pain, although a bit closer to his shoulder blades this time.

His muscles uselessly pull at the bonds on the table as he thrashes as much as he can. The metal is cold beneath his stomach.

Another choked off scream escapes him before it simply dies off into broken sobs.

But even though he is surrounded by people, no one seems to hear.

Tony probably should've stayed next to Peter.

But the thing was, he was - how do you say it? He was freaking out.

He couldn't sit still. He paced up and down the room, never once letting the small boy out of his sight. His small form was peacefully resting beneath the covers, and Tony could almost believe that he was fine.

That they were both fine.

Honestly, the fact that he was alive wasn't what was freaking him out at the moment. Sure, that was a thought constantly pounding at the back of his head, but the ever-pressing thought at the front was of what had happened the night before.

"I love you, kid."

"Love you, too, Dad."

Dad.

He wasn't ready.

Would he ever be ready?

He walked up to the window and stared out into the vastness of the city and the endlessness of the blue sky. The early morning rays of the sun almost blinded him.

"F*ck," he choked out. "How am I supposed to *do* this?" he asked the sky, shaking his head. "How am I supposed replace you?"

He couldn't replace them. Peter deserved so much better than a screw up like him.

Not to say he had any *intent* on replacing the Parkers. He and Peter had had this conversation before - it was in the dead of night, following a terrible dream of Peter's.

(Although "terrible" was relative. Those dreams the first few months after May's death had absolutely *nothing* on the dreams he was having now.)

Ben and May had a special place in Peter's heart, just like Tony. He simply had to keep telling himself that, and maybe the storm in his chest would become calm again.

But was Tony ready to take it further?

Well, he *was* the one to initiate the "I love you"s, no matter how tired he had been. And it wasn't like they hadn't said those words to each other before - even if it truly did feel like a lifetime ago.

Still, that one word weighed on his chest and made dread seep throughout his entire being.

Dad.

His own father was far from what he ever wanted to be. Not with Peter, and not with the kids he might have with Pepper someday if he looked forward far enough.

But at that moment, Peter came first. He came before that distant possible future, and he certainly came before Howard.

Could he be a father to this kid he had come to love so much? Could he try to erase the pain the Raft had brought upon both of them?

He turned around to face Peter, who was still soundly sleeping, before he went right back to pacing.

It was actually around seven months prior that he had almost tried to make their relationship all the more official.

He remembered calling some of his best lawyers up - asking how an heir would affect the company. He remembered calling up even more lawyers about adoption papers.

Then the fire had happened.

God, that fire *broke* Tony.

(Tony Stark didn't break when he was held hostage in a cave. Tony Stark didn't break when someone he trusted stood over him with murderous betrayal. Tony Stark didn't break when he flew a nuke into space, and Tony Stark didn't break when his friend slammed the shield his father made into the Arc Reactor.)

(No. Tony Stark broke when his child was ripped right out of his arms.)

And it wasn't - it wasn't even *death* that ripped him away. It was an old foe, one that he had believed to have been defeated. An old foe that had been hungry for revenge, and Tony had just been too blind to see it.

But now his kid was back. He had a chance to build something permanent with him, to make sure that this precious kid knew just how much he was loved.

But a new question surfaced: did he still have the nerve to do it?

It had taken a year for him to build up enough confidence and reassurance to even begin to go through with it, so how long would it take him this time?

Or , he thought to himself as he stopped at the window again, *I could just suck it up and go for it.*

He couldn't even kid himself: he had been absolutely shattered when the kid had been pronounced dead. Demolished. Crushed.

Broken.

He got so drunk that night that he had had a hangover for days, maybe even weeks, but he still just kept drinking.

Even if the main thing he had wished for on those painful mornings and hopeless nights was to have the kid back, the second most thing he had wished for was to go back and tell the kid just how much he really loved him.

He had that chance now, and he was still a coward.

Tony suddenly shook his head. He couldn't think about that at the moment - he needed to focus on what was right in front of him.

And as soon as he thought of that, questions shot through his head like a bullet train.

Would they need to get counseling? Would Peter ever go back to school? When would they tell his friends? How would the public react to him being alive? Would BARF help at all?

Tony shuddered as that last question ran through his mind. Definitely not.

But maybe he could use his memory software to help Peter without actually making it worse. There could be way to simply extract the memories from his head without forcing him to relive it . . . and maybe Tony could use those memories to help him cope?

Oh, who am I kidding?

Tony wouldn't be able to watch them. They would break him, just like the real experience had broken Peter.

He stopped at the window again.

He had no idea how to help his kid get through this.

Maybe if I-

A terrible scream suddenly cut off his thoughts, causing Tony to whip around so fast that he got whiplash.

Peter was no longer sleeping soundly - and now that Tony thought about it, he probably hadn't been in the first place. His eyes were wide as he stared at the ceiling, and the scream that had torn itself through his throat had died off, leaving him a sobbing mess.

Tony was at his side in seconds.

"Hey, it's okay," he said quickly as he put a gentle hand on Peter's shoulder, but tore it away like he had touched acid when Peter flinched violently.

"H- *help*," Peter whimpered, squeezing his eyes shut.

Tony didn't dare touch him again, but he stayed as close as he possibly could as he whispered. "You're safe, Peter. You can open your eyes. You aren't there, I promise."

But Peter didn't seem to hear him. He only whimpered again as he writhed slightly on the bed, seemingly still in the middle of a dream.

Tony closed his eyes. "Kid--"

"I-it *hurts*," he choked out, causing Tony's eyes to fly back open and stare at his kid's glassy ones. "P-please--"

How was he supposed to help him?

He reached back over his kid again to put a hand in his shoulder - although he was much more gentle. He sighed in relief when he didn't immediately flinch away.

"You're safe, Peter," Tony said. "I'm right here."

Then - a miracle - Peter's eyes flicked over and looked straight into Tony's, and he didn't look away.

And if that broken look wouldn't haunt Tony to his grave, then he didn't know what would.

"T-Tony?"

The billionaire's heart broke yet again as he rubbed his thumb against the kid's shoulder in what he hoped to be a soothing way. "Yeah, kid. It's me."

His eyes squeezed shut. "I - I don't--"

"You don't have to say anything, Pete." Tony kissed his hairline gently. "It's okay."

They were both silent for a long time. Peter focused on his breathing, and Tony just listened. He never realized how beautiful the sound of breaths could be.

He wanted the kid to smile, to laugh, to be happy - but breathing was a start. He could work with breathing. Breathing meant alive.

This kid was alive, and each breath only confirmed that fact.

Peter's stomach growled suddenly, and Tony realized how stupid he was.

Peter hadn't eaten anything real for six months. All he had had in the Med Wing was nutrients through an IV and a few cups of jello. And before that . . .

"Wanna get some breakfast?" Tony asked lightly.

Peter looked up at him with shining eyes. He didn't flinch away, and Tony found himself counting it as a small victory. "Uh, sure, I guess. I mean, if you want."

Tony tried to smile encouragingly, ruffling his hair. "There you go."

Peter smiled slightly for a moment, and Tony tried to burn it into his memory.

He asked Peter if he wanted to change clothes, but he just shook his head. Tony knew the kid found those particular sweats extremely comfortable - and after the horrible Raft uniforms they must have been heavenly.

Peter still became upset at the idea of leaving Tony for the simplest things, like going to the bathroom. And even if the man himself wasn't nearly as okay with it than what was probably healthy, he still waited right outside the door until Peter wheeled himself out.

Was it unhealthy? Yes.

Did Tony care? No.

He used the time that Peter was in the bathroom to tell Friday to call all the Avengers to the kitchen. He knew they probably wouldn't come without proper cause, so he made sure that she would tell them it concerned Peter.

He knew every single one of them would do anything for that kid.

He heard the door click open, so he pocketed his phone and looked over.

Peter was wheeling himself out of the bathroom. He seemed a bit shaky, but as soon as he had Tony in his vision again, he seemed to relax immensely. Tony hated how it was beginning to seem like Peter couldn't be alone at all, but it made sense. Being alone most likely brought him back to when he was alone for every hour of every day.

That would be torture for anyone, but for Peter Parker, it had to have been downright hell on earth.

"You ready to head down?" Tony asked as he ruffled the kid's hair, careful to be as gentle as possible.

Peter nodded. It looked like he tried to smile, but something must have gone wrong - (*a lot of things have gone wrong*) - because he seemed to grimace for a moment before his face went blank again.

Tony couldn't remember the last time such small things had bothered him so much, had made him this upset.

Tony smiled. "Let's go, kiddo."

Stepping out of the elevator felt like stepping into another world.

The elevator was quiet. It was just Tony and Peter. There was nothing to really trigger him - unless he counted the elevator itself, and Peter was trying so hard to focus on anything *but* the elevator itself.

When he was first reintroduced to the team, it was controlled, it was orderly, and it was predictable. It was everything Peter was used to.

This was not.

Talking, laughing, shouting - it filled the whole common area. Team members were sprawled across the couches, sitting at the breakfast bar, lounging at tables.

It was so welcoming. It was warm, and humble, and distantly familiar.

It simply said *home*.

And for a moment - a short, very real moment - it terrified him.

“Hey, guys,” Tony called, wheeling Peter out of the elevator. “I heard there was breakfast.”

Peter didn’t know it was possible for a group so large to get quiet so fast. Heads whipped around to where they stood - and sat - and the carefree environment evaporated instantly.

Peter was repulsed by the fact that he was almost comforted by the silence.

The sleek wooden floors were more interesting than he remembered.

“Yeesh, someone woke up on the wrong side of the bed,” Tony said as he pushed Peter further into the room. “And why the looks? Did I forget to brush my hair?”

No one moved. If there was one thing Peter hadn’t missed on the Raft, it was awkwardness.

Just then, Sam came around the corner from the kitchen with a “Kiss the Cook” apron on. “Who’s hungry, guys?”

Peter felt his lips quirk up at the sight of Sam’s getup. He missed little things like this - little thugs that just made life a bit more meaningful and homely.

His stomach twisted slightly in fear, but he didn’t show it on his face.

Keep your face blank, they won’t get mad, there will be less pain-

“Are you hungry, Pete?” someone asked.

He looked up in surprise, too deep in his thoughts to notice that someone had approached - and was now directly in front of him.

His eyes locked with Steve’s, whose were kind and caring. No malice or ill intent hid in his blue irises.

So why did Peter flinch so violently?

Don't hurt me, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to-

Breathe, breathe, *breathe-*

A hand on his shoulder, they were going to take him away, away to the dark, away to where there was nothing but pain-

I can't, I can't, please don't -

“We’re not going to hurt you, Peter,” a voice said. “Just breathe.”

Breathe, breathe, breathe - cold air in his lungs, cold air all around him-

This horrible feeling clawing at his chest from *within* his chest-

“Peter, please-“

Breathe.

Breathe.

He he wasn't there.

He wasn't there.

I'm not there.

He was home.

He was never going back there.

He was safe.

In Peter's opinion, it took far, far too long for the panic to subside. Despite having just woken up, he could feel fatigue start to pull on his muscles and soul, pulling him down into his chair as he let his heavy eyelids slip shut.

He could sense Tony crouched right in front of him, a grounding hand resting in his shoulder.

Peter lifted his arm to wrap his hand around Tony's wrist. He almost desperately clawed for his pulse point, only relaxing when he found the man's steady heartbeat and let it thrum beneath his fingertips. Just like after his nightmares, it grounded him and told him that everything was real.

That he was going to be okay.

Everyone around him was facing away from him, with something like guilt painted across their features, causing guilt to flare in Peter's own chest.

It was his fault. He couldn't handle looking someone in the eye, and now the Avengers were hurt because Peter was weak.

Too weak to handle those guards. Too weak to get out of his habits. Too weak to handle a few nightmares.

He didn't want to be weak. He wanted to be like himself before the Raft. Before he had been
Before he had been broken.

Speaking wasn't exactly Peter's strongsuit at that moment, considering speaking without prompt on the Raft led to nothing but awful things, but when he looked up at Cap's broken face as he leaned against the wall with his eyes pinched shut, he knew he couldn't just sit there.

“Break, um - breakfast sounds good,” he mumbled.

Everyone turned to him, clearly surprised. And why wouldn't they be surprised? He had just had a freaking panic attack, and he was talking about food.

Good job, Parker , he thought to himself. Way to change the subject.

But Tony just smiled. The sight made the knot in Peter's chest loosen ever so slightly. “You heard him, Sam,” he almost yelled, but not quite, like he was trying not to startle Peter. “You got breakfast ready?”

“H*ll yeah, I do,” Sam said, turning to the kitchen.

“Well, Pete,” Tony said, standing up and going back to push him. “Let's eat.”

Peter ended up in between Tony and Rhodey, across from Nat. She smiled at him, ever so in control of her emotions.

Maybe that was why he could almost look into her eyes. His flicked to hers, and they held each other's gaze for a moment before Peter looked back down to study the curves in the wood again.

She was just so closed off, yet somehow open. She was the right amount of personal and impersonal. Perhaps Steve has just been too personal for someone who had had nothing personal for so long.

If Natasha had been all impersonal, then he would've reacted to her like he did the guards. He would have the *feelings* that came with a panic attack, but he would keep it all in as to not cause himself further pain. But she was the perfect mix. Perfectly controlled. And he was grateful.

Tony nudged him gently with his elbow, and Peter guiltily fought back a flinch. This was Tony. He would *never* hurt him.

His body and reflexes didn't know the difference between Tony and a guard, though.

Peter glanced to the side, looking at the spot on Tony's chest where the arch reactor used to be. "Hm?"

Tony smiled, but concern hid behind it. "You okay?"

Peter did his best to smile. "I, uh, yeah - I mean, why wouldn't I-" he shook his head slightly "- why wouldn't I be?"

Tony opened his mouth as if to respond, but at that moment Sam and Steve, who had offered to help, came out with trays full of breakfast foods for everyone.

Plates were laid out in front of each Avenger. There was bacon, waffles, eggs, fruit, and more on each plate, each of them tailored specifically to each of them.

And in all honesty, Peter wasn't expecting the plate that got dropped in front of him.

Logically, he *should've*. He knew everyone was going to get a plate. He knew they would prepare something for him.

But there was some voice in the back of his head whispering to him, whispering things that made him truly not expect to be treated as an equal, as a human. He was treated like dirt for so long, it was part of his soul.

And another part of him still wasn't sure if this was real. After so long of eating . . . who knew what, what was right before him seemed so far from reality that he couldn't believe his eyes.

He didn't know how or what to feel when he saw his favorite breakfast foods staring at him. He knew tears were forming in his eyes, and he knew that his hands were shaking slightly. But he didn't know how to react.

A hand on his shoulder. "It's okay, Pete."

Distantly he noticed that none of the others had eaten anything yet. Like they were waiting for *him* to take the first bite.

He raised an unsteady fork to his mouth, biting off the small amount of fresh fruit it had on its tip.

Tears definitely fell after that, but no one said anything about it. And for that, Peter was grateful.

By the time his plate was empty, he was so full of food and happiness that he couldn't help but smile.

You could hardly blame him. He hadn't felt that way in a long, long time.

Chapter End Notes

HEY! IMPORTANT!

I have a tumblr now! It's @spideys-sad-and-so-am-i and you should check it out! Send me an ask, message me! I'm always looking for fandom friends! You can ask me about this chapter, ask for a prompt, or whatever you want! Interact with me! Tell me your thoughts! I'll love you forever!

Thank you for reading! I'm so so sorry this took so long! Leave a comment if you wish to please the muses of creativity! Love all of you! Peace!

End Notes

Feel free to leave a review! They LITERALLY make my day, so.

(Song suggestions are always welcome!)

I HAVE A TUMBLR NOW!!!!

It's "spideys-sad-and-so-am-i" please go check it out!!!!

UPDATE OCTOBER 2021:

This story has honestly been emotionally complete to me for a while now. Maybe someday I'll come back to this, but for now I'm happy with where this ends. Peter goes to therapy

with Sam in the future and ends up recovering and living a happy Spider-Man-filled life.

Thank you so much for reading!

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!